

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL
PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS IN THE CALIFORNIA-NEVADA ANNUAL
CONFERENCE, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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Abstract

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL APPOINTMENTS IN THE CALIFORNIA-NEVADA ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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The California-Nevada Annual Conference is a diverse Conference. It is located in Northern California and Nevada. It is the church's goal is to provide pastoral appointments to meet the needs of the diverse Conference. One of the ways of meeting the need is to appoint pastors to cross-cultural ministry settings in churches across the Conference. A cross-cultural appointment is the assignment of a pastor to a church that is not predominately a pastor's culture including language, country of origin, race and ethnicity.

The study investigated the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments, in the areas of pastor-parishioner relationships, acceptance, congregational development, leadership practices, the life of the church and community, the increase or decline in membership, acceptance, racism and the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural pastoral appointments. This project was motivated by the concerns related to the effectiveness of pastors in cross-cultural ministry settings. Some churches in the California-Nevada Conference have experienced decline and the research investigated whether the decline was because of the increase of cross-cultural pastors or for other reasons.

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Chapter 1

Cross-Cultural Pastoral Appointments

In the United Methodist Church

Introduction

The study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments of pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) in the United Methodist Church in the areas of pastor-parishioner relationships, acceptance, congregational development, leadership practices and inclusivity. The research project evaluated the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments by gathering and analyzing the experiences of clergy who serve as cross-cultural pastors and lay persons who are served by cross-cultural pastors in the Conference. The data was obtained through surveys and interviews and analyzed for effectiveness. The effectiveness was measured in terms of pastor-parishioner relationships, acceptance, congregational development, inclusivity, and leadership practices.

Clergy, lay persons, cross-cultural trainers and District Superintendents were invited to complete a survey and to engage in interviews in order to determine what was working or not in cross-cultural appointments in the California-Nevada Conference. The ultimate goal is to enable the Conference to applaud the successes and also to develop new strategies to address what is not working with cross-cultural pastoral appointments.

In the United Methodist Church, cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments represent an effort by the church to respond creatively to the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in congregations and also among the clergy. It is therefore important to have ongoing research and conversation about what the church is accomplishing in the areas of race/ethnicity and also in cultural competencies.

Significance of the Study:

I have been a United Methodist African American pastor for the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) for nearly 17 years. I am considered a cross-cultural/cross-racial pastor. For the purposes of this project, I will only use cross-cultural. The definition for cross-cultural in the appointment context is a pastoral appointment to a church that is not predominately a pastor's culture including language, country of origin, race and ethnicity. For example, I have served at churches with European-American, Hmong, Filipino and Fijian congregants, and at a multi-cultural congregation with seven nationalities, as cross-cultural appointments.

According to Sandy Royall, Sr. Administrative Assistant to Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño, the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) has thirteen cross-cultural appointments as of August 31, 2020.¹ The background context stems from dealing with the need to appoint pastors to serve churches. With the demographic change in America, church leadership have been forced to deal with the diversity in congregations and pastoral appointments. Pastors, specifically pastors of color, have been appointed to mainly European-American churches because of the lack of European-American pastors and the lack of churches for people of color. As time progressed, not only were pastors of different ethnic and racial backgrounds pastoring European-American churches, they were also appointed where the pastor and the majority of the

¹ Sandy Royall, Sr. Administrative Assistant to Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño, San Francisco Area, United Methodist Church, August 26, 2020, email interview with author, sandyr@cnumc.org.

Ms. Royal states, "Good afternoon Rochelle. Thanks for your patience. I was able to find that there are currently 13 cross cultural appointments in the California Nevada Conference. Please let me know if there is anything more I can assist with."

members represented different ethnic or racial groups. For example, a Korean pastor would be appointed to a Tongan church and a Filipino pastor to a Japanese church.

As a Circuit Leader and a former intercultural trainer for the Conference, I've heard stories of the members in different congregations and their attitudes and responses to the cross-cultural appointments. As cross-cultural appointments have increased in the Conference, complaints about the cross-cultural pastors have also increased. For example, some members of European-American churches complained they could not understand the ethnic pastor because English was the pastor's second language. So, some members of that congregation would transfer to another United Methodist church that was predominately European-American. Some church members left a church because they did not want to share their facility with a congregation with a different cultural group. For example, when a Pacific Islander congregation was being developed by a Tongan pastor as a second service at a European-American church, most of the members left the church and joined a predominately European-American church a couple of towns over. Also, there were requests from churches to the Conference leadership asking that certain nationalities not be sent to their church. For example, a congregation told a District Superintendent to not send them a "Black pastor" because they did not want "a Baptist preacher." I expect to learn of positive and challenging situations during my interviews with pastors, laity and Conference leadership.

Along with being a pastor in cross-cultural ministry for nearly seventeen years, I have served on several Conference and District Committees. I served on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry for twelve years, the Council on Clergy Development for many years and currently serve on the Conference Committee for Ethnic Ministries and Outreach, the Conference Committee on African-American/Black Ministries and I am a Bay District Circuit

Leader for eight churches. I served in the United Methodist Black Methodists for Church Renewal Caucus as the Western Jurisdiction Coordinator, on the National Board and the founder and former President of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Bay Area, California-Nevada Annual Conference.

I also worked in supervisory and managerial positions in diverse secular workplaces for nearly twenty-five years. What I find disappointing is that the church is the last institution to deal with diversity and from my experience has not lived up to its charge to “love your neighbor.” It is important that we evaluate the effectiveness of cross-cultural pastoral appointments to develop strategies and create best practices for pastors and churches.

This research study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of the cross-cultural appointments in various areas including acceptance, cultural competency, congregational development, inclusivity and leadership practices. These competencies and practices are vital for a successful cross-cultural ministry. *The Book of Discipline* that provides guidance to order the practices within the United Methodist Church requires Annual Conferences to prepare their clergy and the congregations for cross-cultural appointments. The operative word in the Book of Discipline policies is training. Training that is designed for clergy, congregations, staff-parish relations committees, and Annual Conferences.

Context of the Study:

The United Methodist Church is an international denomination. There are over 12 million diverse members throughout the world. In the United States, according to the recent demographic figures for the national United Methodist church from the Pew Research Center

state the membership is 94% Caucasian.² The 6% consists of people of color. The demographic breakdown in the California-Nevada Conference based on the 2019 Conference statistical data is 63% white and 37% people of color (see Appendix 1). Many of the 37% are of different cultures, ethnic backgrounds and nationalities from throughout the world whose ancestors were converted to Christianity by Methodist missionaries. They have migrated to the United States and joined the United Methodist Church. Some of the members consist of African American, Asian, Latino and Pacific Islanders.

The focus for this research project was the California-Nevada Annual Conference. The Annual Conference is comprised of churches in northern California and northern Nevada. There are many nationalities that are represented in the Conference. Because of the diversity of the denomination, the church believes it is important to be in mission to serve all God's children and has established a mandate which is found in *The Book of Discipline*. The mandate says, "We affirm our unity in Christ, and take faithful steps to live more fully into what it means to be a worldwide church in mission for the transformation of the world. We commit ourselves to crossing boundaries of language, culture, and social or economic status. We commit ourselves to be in ministry with all people, as we in faithfulness to the gospel seek to grow in mutual love and trust."³ One of the ways that the church seeks to fulfill the mandate is through the pastoral appointment process. The *Book of Discipline* says,

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which

² Michael Lipka, "The most and least racially diverse U.S. religious groups," Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>.

³ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016) ¶ 125, 95-96.

the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background. Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, bishops, cabinets and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergypersons so appointed and their congregations.⁴

The Book of Discipline is clear about the process and the mandate regarding cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. It is also clear about the process of itineracy and the mandate for the annual conferences and the role of the staff-parish relations committee. *The Book of Discipline* says,

Appointments are to be made with consideration of gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement. Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-relations committees emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age.⁵

Even as the church tries to be faithful to an open itineracy where appointments are made without regard to race/ethnicity, it is also very important not to avoid the conversations around race and the education that is needed to enable the church to live out its ministry within the walls of the sanctuary and beyond. The following section deals with racism, an issue that has plagued the United Methodist Church from its very inception and continues to challenge its life and witness today.

⁴*The Book of Discipline 2016*, ¶ 425,4, 347-348.

⁵*The Book of Discipline 2016*, ¶ 425,4, 347.

Racism and the Church:

Racism in the church is the nemesis that hinders the cross-cultural pastor from being effective. Racism keeps the pastor and the congregation focused on conflict and confusion instead of on unity and productivity. Even when cross-cultural pastors attempt to address racism, many are not open for the discussion. Drew G.I Hart is a theologian, author and blogger, who examines the church's views towards racism. He proclaims:

Churches have often been the least helpful place to discuss racism in our white-dominated society. If racism is talked about at all, it is often addressed on isolated Sundays set apart for grieving some national event or engaging in sparse or limited pulpit swaps. None of those efforts are necessarily problematic. But when our actions are limited to such strategies, they reveal that we don't really understand the full scope or nature of race and racism in our society. And therein lies the problem. Churches operating out of dominant culture intuitions, perceptions, assumptions, and experiences define the problem one way, while most black people and other oppressed groups bear witness to an alternative and divergent reality. This epistemological divide concerning racism—that is, the different ways of knowing and understanding life—is an even greater gap within the church than it is among the rest of society.⁶

Unfortunately, the institutional church was founded on a seed of racism. Throughout the years, as recorded, as witnessed, the church has not dealt with racism nor has it taken a collective stand against racism in our country. Racial injustice and social unrest continue in this country because of the killing of Black people by law enforcement. Protesters fill the streets in large numbers to ask for reforms and justice after the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, among others and the paralysis of Jacob Blake, but the voice of the church is not a united chorus calling for reforms and justice. This inability of the church to be resolute in the struggle for racial justice allows congregations to continue to operate in a segregated and racist fashion.

⁶ Drew G.I. Hart, *Trouble I've Seen, Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisburg: Herald Press, 2016), 20.

For change to happen and for the church to truly become inclusive, the Christian church must change and must repent of its sin of racism. The church must acknowledge what it has done and what it is doing to ensure that racism does not continue to happen in the future. Soong-Chan Rah says, “Specifically for the church in America, we need to recognize and acknowledge circumstances of the past. The way churches failed to confront the evils of slavery, at times even offering support for this institution . . . that the church failed to confront segregation, and even how the church promoted it . . . these examples all point to the need of the church in the twenty-first century to acknowledge and confront a history of racial insensitivity and prejudice.”⁷ The church is the institution that can make a change in the area of racism, but it must choose to serve in that manner. The Bible teaches us that God created the human race, one group of people with different nationalities. Debby Irving, an author and racial justice educator says, “The story of race is at the center of racism’s entanglement. The very idea that the world’s many peoples could be categorized by something called “race” is a story, one that has created a system of dominance for its storytellers. The story of race has become a self-fulfilling, self-perpetuating prophecy as the story creates the ideas, which then reinforce the story. The tragedy is the individual and collective potential that has been crushed by the power of a single story.”⁸

During my research, I have read several definitions of racism. Choy-Wong defines racism as, “The belief that one ethnic stock is superior over others with the power to enforce this view. It is prejudice, bigotry, stereotypes and discrimination systemically, institutionally, pervasively, and routinely enforced by persons in power, authority and resources. One description is

⁷ Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors, Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 47.

⁸ Debby Irving, *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Cambridge: Elephant Room Press, 2014), 84.

‘prejudice plus power.’”⁹ Racists operate out of a belief system that their physical appearance makes them superior in intellect, in values, in skills and in rights. Debby Irving says, “No science supports the idea that genetic makeup follows the neat racial lines white people have created. No science links race to intrinsic traits such as intelligence or musical or physical abilities.”¹⁰

Racism does not only have an inward component of belief but it also has an outward component or a system which is put in place to provide opportunities, privileges, and rights for some, while denying those same opportunities, privileges, and rights to others. Irving continues the conversation by stating, “The racially divisive belief barrier shows up in all American institutions: in medical policy, in emergency rooms, in education reform, in classrooms, in corporate hiring policies, in workplaces, in lending policies, in banks, in federal policies, in state policies, and in municipal policies. Racism lives in individuals’ hearts and minds; those in power embed it into institutional policies and practices. Systemic racism touches every aspect of every American life and skin-color determines how.”¹¹

Some in the dominant culture have sought to deny the existence of systemic racism and focus instead only on the need for an inward change of heart. The church has to work on both fronts-the individual and communal ‘beliefs’, and also on the systemic dimensions of racism. As the church deals with racism, re-training or re-discipling is necessary. David Swanson says,

Understanding the big-ness of racial discipleship is essential to understanding the extent of the problem, as well as the importance of re-imagining Christian discipleship practices that direct us toward solidarity. There is danger in this approach, though. By focusing so persistently on the systemic nature of race and racism, we can miss the embodied nature of the problem we face. We must not allow our focus on the big picture to distract us from the actual decisions white Christians make, which produce particular hardships and

⁹ Choy-Wong, *Building Bridges*, 36.

¹⁰ Irving, *Waking Up White*, 39.

¹¹ Irving, *Waking Up White*, 59.

sufferings in other people's lives. Yes, it is true that we have been racially disciplined by a deceived and destructive society. But it is also true that this discipleship is expressed and encouraged by the decisions we make ourselves. And these choices, hard as this may be to confess, reveal our complicity with the racialized society that has long been at work on our desires and imaginations.¹²

Cross-cultural pastors are by their very position agents of transformation. The mission of the United Methodist is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Paul offers the following exhortation: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”¹³ David Swanson writes about the challenge of transformation and what it entails. He states, “Yet the discipleship journey to redirect our desires toward the reconciled kingdom of God cannot be rushed. Our emotions must be fully engaged. After all, our discipleship paradigm is deeply concerned with our affections and loves. As desiring beings, it is our hearts that need transformation, and this cannot be accomplished simply by receiving new information.”¹⁴

In the book, *Blank Slate: Write Your Own Rules for a 22nd Century Church Movement*, the authors believe transformation is necessary for the church as well. They believe that it is the new mission of the church to transform and to correct the evils of the past. The authors state, “Our challenge is to stand within the culture but to transform it by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit toward justice, equality and freedom.”¹⁵ The authors write about the cultural change and how to address it in the church from a missional point of view. The authors further proclaim,

¹² David Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 45.

¹³ Romans 12: 1-2 (NRSV).

¹⁴ Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, 45.

¹⁵ Lia McIntosh, Jasmine Rose Smothers, and Rodney Thomas Smothers, *Blank Slate: Write Your Own Rules for a 22nd Century Church Movement* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2019), 142.

“Our definition of mission in a multicultural, intergenerational context is a divine assignment by God and for God to be in solidarity with the world especially the oppressed or the ubuntu.”¹⁶

Many cross-cultural pastors feel that they are “called” to be a cross-cultural pastor. They feel that God has sent them on a mission to teach the congregants, especially those in the dominant culture, to love everybody.

¹⁶ McIntosh, Smothers and Thomas, *Blank Slate*, 142.

Chapter 2

Cross-Cultural Pastoral Ministry

This chapter explores cross-cultural pastoral ministry by addressing issues of cultural competency training, experiential training, seminary training and local church training. It also examines spiritual practices and strategic leadership practices as critical areas of focus for successful cross-cultural ministry.

Cultural competency training

As a new cross-cultural pastor in 2004, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Lucia Ann McSpadden. I was invited to join a group of cross-cultural pastors who was learning about the ministry and training new cross-cultural pastors and congregations in the California-Nevada Annual Conference in cultural competency. McSpadden has a PhD in both cross-cultural education and anthropology and is the author of *Meeting God at the Boundaries, Cross-Cultural/Cross-Racial Clergy Appointments*. She was inspired to write the book after she and others performed a three-year study that was commissioned by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church. McSpadden says,

The aim of the project was to gather and analyze the experiences of leaders and congregations in existing cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments in the denomination. By describing, analyzing and comparing the institutional and personal efforts and responses in these appointments, the study sought to identify what worked, did not work, and to understand which influences were significant. The purpose was to support the clergy, the churches, and the denominational leadership in their risk-taking, vision, and determination to forge new, more inclusive ways of being the church of Jesus Christ in a racist and increasingly separated society, allowing these efforts to be more effective. A number of assumptions underlie this study:

1. The United States continues to be a racist society.
2. Institutional racism is pervasive, poorly understood, and not recognized by those in power.
3. Personal relationships are powerful forces in a local congregation.

4. Experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and respect are culturally shaped and may be expressed and received differently across ethnic and/or racial identities.
5. Expectation, relationships, skills, and personal and denominational support are intertwined and predictably complex.¹⁷

Today in 2020, some of the assumptions are still prevalent in the church; Not only in the United Methodist Church, but also in the universal church, i.e. religious institutions. The statement made many years ago by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “11:00 a.m. on Sunday is the most segregated hour in America” is still true. This is so because Christians are still worshipping in their mono-cultured and segregated congregations brought about by segregated neighborhoods, language barriers, tradition and cultural preference. In addition, there are the insidious and pernicious vices that plague congregations and have not been confronted or overcome. These include practices of discrimination and exclusion brought about by bigotry, prejudice, racism, sexism and white supremacy.

McSpadden’s findings reveal a telling story about the institution that is supposed to promote love and not hatred. The church’s foundation is to promote God’s commandment of love and unity. The United Methodist Church, because of its policies, has taken a stand towards creating a more inclusive church through its pastoral appointment system. As the United Methodist Church works towards being an inclusive church, the church leadership must first address some of the findings of the 1993 study by the Fund for Theological Education.

McSpadden says,

The study revealed a lack of authentic relationships across ethnic groups as well as a lack of positive valuation of culturally different leadership styles. Clergy expressed anger and frustration at not having their skills and experience validated, at being regarded as “tokens” and not taken seriously across ethnic lines, and at not being respected. Ethnic

¹⁷ Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-cultural/Cross-racial Clergy Appointments* (Nashville, Tennessee: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2003), 8.

minority clergy said that they had to “act and think white,” in order to be included. Their assessment was that they were blocked from pastoring Euro-American churches.¹⁸

As cross-cultural competency trainers and were later formed as I-relate Intercultural competency trainers, we dealt with the disparities found in the study. One of the trainers, Kathryn Choy-Wong, stated that building bridges is a key component in effective cross-cultural ministry. She posits the question, “Why should we go out of our way to build bridges with people whose lives are different from our own?” She answers, “Because God assumes, we will!”¹⁹ She further states, “We cannot fully appreciate the fullness of God’s creation without getting to know as many of the different parts as possible. So, God gave us the greatest commandment: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself* (Luke 10:27a). God loves this diverse world so much that he gave his Son Jesus that we may have eternal life. This is the love God speaks of and desires us to practice in the world. Building bridges is part of that love.”²⁰ I am of the same mind in terms of our human lives and relationships. The church should always stress the point of our being created by the same God and not let our differences dictate our behavior and actions toward each other and remain loving and caring towards each other as God calls us to be.

Eric H. F. Law is considered an authority on multiculturalism and on developing inclusive communities. He has developed ways in which churches and communities can become places of inclusivity and show compassion for each other. He has developed methods of inclusivity, which include guidelines for multicultural meetings and exploring the dynamics of diverse cultures to

¹⁸ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 2.

¹⁹ Kathryn Choy-Wong, *Building Bridges: A Handbook for Cross-cultural Ministry* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1998), 2.

²⁰ Choy-Wong, *Building Bridges*, 2.

create an inclusive community. Law is an Episcopal priest and the founder and Executive Director of the Kaleidoscope Institute, which provides training and resources for creating inclusive and sustainable churches and communities.

I also share Law's philosophy when he says, "We are all human beings; deep down we are really the same."²¹ Unity is a major teaching of the Christian faith and a critical component of the life of the church. With this in mind, one goal of cross-cultural appointments is to unify the church through love. I believe that the church is the vehicle in which we all learn to love each other and become one in Christ. For this to happen, we must allow cross-cultural pastors to be used by God to help congregations learn how to love each other through interaction, intentional communication and collaboration. Law says, "Pastors are the people who we have sent out into the world to mediate differences and conflicts among groups. They are a people we must support, nurture, and empower to be our guides as we engage in dialogue with each other on level ground."²²

In his best-selling signature work, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Law asks the question,

Can the church be God's holy mountain on which people from diverse cultures shall not hurt or destroy each other? The church, in the most basic way, is the bringing together of people, sometimes very diverse cultural backgrounds. When people from diverse cultural backgrounds come together, the power dynamic in which one group dominates and claims more power than the other is inevitable. In a multicultural community, doing the work of justice requires us to understand the different perceptions of power from different cultural points of view. If we can understand the internal cultural values behind why some people seem powerless and others powerful, then we can understand the root cause of this 'wolf and lamb' scenario. With this knowledge, we can then work toward finding new ways of being where power is more evenly distributed.²³

²¹ Eric H.F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing but Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1996), 46.

²² Law, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed*, 73.

²³ Eric H.F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With The Lamb* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1996), 14.

With cross-cultural pastoral appointments, power is given to those who normally do not have it because of their skin color or culture. Those who normally have the power have to learn how to release the power to those who traditionally have been treated as inferior and who have experienced powerlessness.

The cultural competency work performed by I-relate applied the work of several people in this field. One expert in the field of Intercultural Training is Dr. Milton Bennett. He created The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (1986, rev.1993) as a framework to explain the reactions of people to others with cultural differences. In both academic and corporate settings, he observed that individuals confronted cultural differences in some predictable ways as they learned to become more competent intercultural communicators. Using concepts from cognitive psychology and constructivism, he organized these observations into six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference. The six stages are denial of cultural difference, defense against cultural difference, minimization of cultural difference, acceptance of cultural difference, adaptation of cultural difference, and acceptance of integration.²⁴

The first three DMIS stages are ethnocentric, meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way and the second three DMIS stages are ethnorelative, meaning that one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures. Using this model, a pastor or a layperson can discover the stage they are in to help them in the development of relationships and in the understanding of how other cultures perceive them.²⁵

²⁴ Milton J. Bennett, "A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10, no. 2 (1986): 179-95.

²⁵ Bennett, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 179-95.

Let us look briefly at the stages.

- (i) Stage one is denial. Denial is found mostly in monocultural settings. People in this stage deny that there are any differences across cultures. Because of their monocultural lifestyle, they have not engaged with other people and would say there are no differences. Also, they are not welcoming to people of other cultures and many have a superiority complex.
- (ii) Stage two is defense. People usually admit that there are differences between cultures, but are not quite sure how to deal with them. These types of people may smile in your face and then stab you in your back.
- (iii) Stage three is minimization. McSpadden states, “People at this stage are still threatened by cultural differences, and they respond by minimizing these differences. However, they do not consider those who are different as inferior, misguided, or unfortunate. They believe that these differences are real but not especially deep or significant. For them, the similarities between people still outweigh whatever differences there might be. Difference is superficial; ‘underneath’ we share many of the same values and beliefs. If people in the denial stage deny differences, people in the defense stage accept but demonize difference, then people in the minimization stage trivialize difference.”²⁶
- (iv) Stage four is acceptance. McSpadden says, “For people at this stage, cultural differences run deep and are legitimate. They acknowledge the difference between people as genuine and accept the inevitability of other value systems and behavioral norms. For them, cultural differences are a fact of life. They still find some behaviors

²⁶ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 22.

- hard to deal with or accept, but they are not threatened by these behaviors and do not condemn them. While these people are inclined to adopt any of these behaviors or adjust their own behavior to be culturally more sensitive, they have a more tolerant and sympathetic attitude. They are neutral, not positive about differences.”²⁷
- (v) Stage five is adaptation. Adaptation means there is a change in people’s behavior. I have witnessed behavioral change when a person has discovered similarities with a person of a different culture. Several years ago, I convened and facilitated a leadership retreat for the leaders of my church. The leaders were of different nationalities. I invited them to participate in an exercise to get to know each other through talking about their grandparents. I paired off the participants. One pair consisted of an African American male and a European American male. During their conversation, they discovered that their grandfathers were farmers. Once the white congregant realized that his grandfather was a farmer like the African American’s grandfather, I noticed a complete change in his behavior during and after the retreat. He did not feel threatened anymore and felt positive about his relationship with the African American male because of their commonality.
- (vi) The final stage is integration. McSpadden informs us, “In the integration stage, certain aspects of another culture or cultures become a part of the individual’s identity. Persons at this stage no longer identify completely with their native culture; yet they do not belong to another culture either.”²⁸ I have noticed this stage with my cousins. Their father was a career armed services officer, they traveled throughout the

²⁷ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 28.

²⁸ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 31.

world. They really could not identify with one culture because they had been immersed in several cultures while growing up.

As cultural competency trainers, we used the DMIS model allowing pastors and congregations to discover the stage of cultural competency they were in. Based on their discovery, pastors and laity would take the appropriate steps to decide if they wanted to move to the next stage in their competency journey. Some would be surprised at their stage, deny the stage they were in, or applaud the stage. Some did not care and continued to behave in the manner they were currently engaging in.

The discovery of Cultural competency is key in effective cultural communications. Communication is key to establishing respectable relationships. Dr. Law discovered and uses a method to help with inclusive communication. It is titled Mutual Invitation and is used to facilitate sharing and discussion in a multicultural group process.²⁹ The process of Mutual Invitation presents an opportunity to allow everyone to speak in a group setting. After a person speaks, they invite someone else to speak and the person either speaks or passes. The person who passes can contribute to the conversation later or not contribute at all. This method is needed because of language issues in group situations. Euro-Americans are normally the persons who do most of the communicating. Persons whose first language is not English are shy about talking and afraid they may mis-speak or cannot articulate in the manner that Euro-Americans can.

I have pastored churches with various Asian, Pacific Islander, and Euro-American cultures and the Mutual Invitation method really works. It really helps in assuring that everyone has the chance to share. The truth is if you do not allow others to speak and share what is in their

²⁹ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, 113-114.

hearts or on their minds, you will never get to know them to develop relationships. Mutual Invitation not only helps in developing relationships, it also shifts the power of communication from the dominant group to other cultures in the group. Dr. Law explains, “Mutual Invitation gives everyone the experience to exercise power. It also offers opportunity to use power again and again. The repeated experience of power enables powerless people eventually to claim their share of power with ease and comfort. Sometimes a lamb needs to be told again and again that he or she is not weak but is as strong as the lions and the wolves in the Peaceable Realm. The lamb may not believe it at first, but if the invitation to exercise power is persistently there, the lamb may eventually believe it.”³⁰

In a cross-cultural congregational setting, at some point, because of the communication and interaction between various cultures, congregants begin to realize that everyone is not the same. But when those in power, normally the dominant culture, cannot understand or are not capable of dealing with people who are not like them, they begin to fear and their oppressive thought processes begins to occur. When this happens, the oppressor begins to act in a way that gives the impression that they are superior or better than the pastor or other congregants when actually they are not. Mutual Invitation diffuses or shifts the power to others, who are just as competent or have skills just as the oppressor has. Mutual Invitation allows for oppressors to become knowledgeable about others’ gifts and graces and allows everyone to use their talents and skills to establish or meet goals.

Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, is the greatest example of a powerful cross-cultural communicator. He talked to everyone such as the disciples, men, women, Samaritans, demons,

³⁰ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, 87.

and his enemies. Jesus crossed cultures and boundaries to show us how to effectively establish relationships with all people by communicating with people regardless of their culture or nationality. Cross-cultural pastors and congregations need communication tools such as Mutual Invitation if they want to succeed in developing relationships.

Experiential Training

Cross-cultural pastoral ministry is a unique phenomenon. It is the goal of the cross-cultural pastor to create relationships with the parishioners of different backgrounds and to help parishioners of different cultures in their relationships with God and with each other. In some instances, there are no set rules or regulations to follow because it is a matter of trial and error. When providing experiential training for pastors, case studies and storytelling are two approaches that may yield helpful and productive outcomes.

A. Case Studies

There are case studies that have been developed to help pastors deal with unique and challenging situations. In the context of the United Methodist Church, there have been several authors within the church who have shared their discoveries and ideas to help develop cross-cultural pastoral competency. The United Methodist Executive Director of Life- Long Learning, HiRho Y. Park, lays out best practices, theories, advice and so forth in her book titled, “Develop Intercultural Competence, How to Lead Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Churches.” Dr. Park’s book was written to help pastors and congregations develop cultural competence. As a cultural competency trainer, I agree with Dr. Park regarding her belief in the practice of engaging in case studies. She says,

Leading in a multicultural context with cross-racial and cross-cultural intricacies can be intriguing yet confusing. We often face a dilemma in a multicultural setting because we can't see alternative solutions. This is true for many local churches. Using a case study for cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry is intended to help readers merge their knowledge and experience into thoughtful discussions so that they, as a group, explore possible solutions to complex issues. The best solution begins with deep listening as participants seek to articulate their thoughts.³¹

Case studies are used to teach and learn about cultural competency. Learning how others dealt with a particular situation can teach about solutions to problems and situations. Case studies are a very effective method of cultural competency training because of the wisdom that can be gleaned from reality of the case studies and the practicality of the approach to the study. Cross-cultural pastoral appointments and ministry can be a very sensitive topic. Offering the opportunity to study a case with similar problems and circumstances in a group setting can be empowering and enlightening to the attendees.

Case studies are problem solving mechanisms that require conversation and discussion. Engagement with case studies using the Mutual Invitation method can be very effective to ensure everyone has an opportunity to share their opinions. Dr. Law uses case studies in his cultural competency training. He says, "In this chapter, we will look at a case study in which a multicultural group succeeded temporarily to live out the spirituality of choosing the cross for the white members of the group and the spirituality of resurrection for the people of color."³² Each case study has its own nuances. The nuances can lead to increased relationship development between cultures or create an uncomfortable situation. The results of Law's case led to a powerful group releasing their powers to a less or conceived less powerful group in order to find

³¹ HiRho Y. Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence, How to Lead Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Churches* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2018), 11-12.

³² Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, 63.

common ground. Law teaches us, “The experience of the white group in this conference was a living example of a group realizing their domination just by being who they were and deciding to take a powerless position. In this case, they literally faced the will in order to be equal to the people of color. For the people of color, by being in a group of seemingly powerless people, they found power and self-esteem in their collectiveness and returned to meet the other on equal ground. The resolution to speak alternately was an example of creating an environment in which everyone is interacting on equal ground.”³³

Case studies can provide examples of real-life situations and possible outcomes in cross-cultural relationships. Studying the cases allows others to learn from good choices or bad choices made in these instances. Having the information from the case study allows the participants to evaluate and draw insightful conclusions that are beneficial and productive to the parties involved. That is the power of knowing someone’s situation. Both case studies and storytelling are key in receiving insight and wisdom to help in developing cultural competency and cultural relationships. We are now turning our attention to storytelling.

B. Storytelling

Storytelling in the context of cross-cultural pastoral appointments can be a very helpful training exercise. Cross-cultural ministry is either a story of cultures working together and being effective, or a story of consistent culture clash and being ineffective which can result in a closed church.

³³ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with The Lamb*, 68.

Storytelling is a method of sharing one's experience with others. Karen D. Scheib says, "Our very identity is composed by and communicated through story. Stories do many things, but their primary purpose is to convey meaning, including assigning meaning to the many practices in which we engage, from how we parent and eat to how we exercise and minister."³⁴ The idea of sharing our stories as a part of a cultural competency training program can be very powerful. The training session should include both the cross-cultural pastor and members of the congregation, specifically the leadership of the church and interested members. When sharing our life stories with others, we create in the minds of listeners our identity.

Our stories tell who we are, what we believe and what we have gone through in our lives. The cross-cultural pastor should be the first person to share his/her story to the congregants and trainers. In this time of sharing, the pastor can inform the congregants of their culture, life story, call story, personal and pastoral life and their relationship with God. The pastor may share about the joys and challenges of life, the suffering, the heartaches and successes regarding being a cross-cultural pastor. It would be an open time for the pastor to have the attention of the parishioners in a non-threatening environment. The time allotted for the sharing should be timed but with time for questions and answers as well.

I-relate's training sessions included storytelling. We realized when cross-cultural pastors have the opportunity to share their stories with congregants, which in many instances are the dominant culture, it can be a life-changing experience. The revelation that occurs through sharing is that pastors and parishioners of various cultures realize they are more similar than different. Stories can bring people together because of familiarity. Jeanne McCullough says,

³⁴ Karen D. Scheib, *Attend to Stories: How to Flourish in Ministry* (Nashville: Wesley's Floundery Books, 2018), 3.

“Have you ever noticed that when the family gets together at special times during the year, the same old stories find a way of being shared? You know, don’t you, that they’re part of the stuff that glues the generations together?”³⁵ Stories glue people together.

When the cross-cultural pastor and the parishioners share stories, the experiences and the knowing of the experiences becomes the glue that creates the relationships and establishes a church family. The goal of the cross-cultural pastor is for the pastor and the parishioners to be glued together as the body of Christ. Storytelling is key factor in the training component and in establishing relationships. As Christians, as believers in God, we should know the power of storytelling because our faith is based on the story of God and God’s people as recorded in the Bible. The Bible also informs us how different cultures have intermingled throughout the life of the Bible.

Seminary Training

Many believe that the training for the cross-cultural pastor should begin in seminary. Unfortunately, seminaries do not provide enough cross-cultural training. Ken Walden expresses his disappointment in this fact:

Graduate theological schools should be one of the primary partners with the Christian church for direction and instruction, but many have been largely silent on diversity issues within their own institutions and within the church. There is little dialogue and a lack of serious study on church diversity. Unfortunately, many graduate theological schools reflect a similar lack of diversity as the churches they are supposed to help prepare clergy to serve. That is a huge part of the Christian churches’ diversity problem.³⁶

This is very true because there were no courses during the time of my graduate work. It would

³⁵ William Willimon, et al., *The Pastor’s Guide to Effective Ministry* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 21.

³⁶ Ken Walden, *Practical Theology for Church Diversity, A Guide for Clergy and Congregations* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 8.

make a big difference with pastors and congregations if classes were held on cross-cultural ministry. Walden continues with a recommendation saying,

Viewing the picture requires an examination of contributing factors that inhibit cross-racial pastoral ministry and multicultural ministry. This examination is primarily not intended to blame anyone, but instead to help envision and then implement solutions. More research is needed on church diversity. There should be research on discrimination and the causes of the lack of diversity in congregations. To be sure, the reasons that church diversity is a challenge are many and complex. In order for Christian congregations to thrive in a changing world, however, they need resources, education, and leadership. The topic of church diversity is deserving of serious, multifaceted investments: intellectual, financial, and human capital.³⁷

Ken Walden's approach to cross-cultural ministry is from a practical point of view stemming from his systemic theological perspective and pastoral experience. I agree that training in the graduate theological schools would bring credibility to the conversation of diversity and cross-cultural ministry. Graduate theological schools need to create a curriculum and hire professors who have the pastoral and academic expertise to teach students about church diversity. Graduate schools need to also show more diversity in the hiring of more professors of color to show they are attempting to be inclusive. Sometimes there is an argument that graduate theological schools cannot find professors of color to teach about diversity. In many cases, it is not a matter of not being able to locate professors, but a matter of realizing discriminatory practices have kept people of color out of the higher education system and are now playing "catch up" to the privileged ones who have been allowed. There are many professors of varying ethnic groups, but a determined and focused search committee must be put in place. The graduate theological schools must set an example for the church.

Unfortunately, the graduate school experience is a mirror of the church. As a graduate student, I noticed that the different cultures were grouped together. When I was obtaining my

³⁷ Walden, *Practical Theology for Church Diversity*, 9.

MDiv at Claremont, a beautiful situation happened between the African American women and the Korean men. The issue was prayer time in the chapel. The different cultures would use the chapel at various times. One of the Korean male students and I became friends. We spent time together during class and after class. He was a part of the Korean student's group and I was a part of the African American women student's group. Both of our groups prayed in the school chapel at different times according to our schedules. The process to use the chapel involved scheduling the time beforehand. One semester, due to the changes in our schedules, the African American women had to reschedule their prayer time. Unfortunately, the time we needed was at the same time as the Korean men's time period. So, the women asked me to ask my friend if we could pray with them in the chapel. At first, they said no. We thought it was a racial issue. Then after praying and further communication with my friend, the Korean men said yes. Initially, we thought we would just share the space. They thought we wanted to pray with them. We decided to engage in the latter. It was a glorious sight to see the African American women and the Korean men praying together in the chapel. Our prayer time was powerfully glorious and I believe God was pleased with us. Also, this was an unprecedented response to a bigger issue of inclusivity. I was told later by one of the Korean women that the Korean men would not let the Korean women pray with them. But after the men said yes to us, they allowed the Korean women to start praying with them and the women were very happy.

It is the role of the church and the clergy to create a culturally competent and inclusive church. Graduate schools with designated class time and units for cultural competency would ensure that the expertise needed is available to transform the church. Clergy need to be equipped and prepared to be effective in cross-cultural pastoral ministry because of the challenges they will face, especially in the area of racism.

Spiritual Practices

The pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting will lead people in spiritual practices that contribute to faith formation and spiritual growth. These spiritual practices also need to be effective in helping congregations engage in authentic disciple-making. This section examines two spiritual practices that require careful leadership: (i) Worship and (ii) Compassion practice.

A. Worship

Creating and leading worship services and practices is a major part of the role of the pastor. The pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting is always challenged to be able to create a worship experience that will satisfy all the cultures in the church in a setting that is transformational for the parishioners and the pastor. We know that worship experiences entail a particular liturgy of Sunday worship, weekly Bible study and prayer, daily devotionals and small group studies. However, with cross-cultural pastoral appointments, more negative conversation occurs in the decision-making process than positive. McSpadden says, “Worship style seems to be a consistent flash point for conflict, resistance, dialogue and compromise. Should worship be formal or informal? Should we use hymns and songs from different cultures? How long should the service last, and who should lead it? How long should the pastor preach, and what topics should he or she choose? If we were ever in doubt about the importance of worship for our churches, we need only consider the vigorous discussion that is taking place in cross-cultural-racial ministry!”³⁸

Pastors in cross-cultural ministry settings deal with all the ways people want to worship. Many pastors spend hours making decisions, compromising and scheduling to create a worship

³⁸ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 84.

experience that works. Preaching is the biggest issue and problem ethnic pastors are faced with because of language. Sometimes English is the second language of the pastor may present a problem. But it is important for the pastor to preach the message of love and unity and to keep the message simple. HiRho Park states, “Therefore, pastors in a cross-racial and cross-cultural setting who are deeply spiritual or who continue practicing spiritual disciplines can create a vital congregation with preaching that is sound, biblically grounded, theologically Wesleyan, and applicable ore relevant to people’s daily lives.”³⁹

On the other side of the conversation, there may be the practices that the church is engaging in that are not working to transform and make true disciples of Jesus Christ. Reggie McNeal, a prominent leader in church reform states, “The daily practice of the spiritual disciplines offers a way to develop a reflective lifestyle. These disciplines, used by the church throughout history, are solitude, worship, prayer, fasting, study, confession, giving and celebration. Dabbling in these disciplines will not work. Adding these disciplines to an already overcrowded and over-busy life might produce some short-term change and heightened connection with Jesus. However, for genuine transformation to occur, these disciplines must become a way of life. Other things in our lives probably will have to be sacrificed in order to make room for these practices.”⁴⁰ Not only must the spiritual disciplines become a way of life, following God must become a way of life. The pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting is challenged to find a way to introduce spiritual practices to be effective in authentic disciple-making. The spiritual practices the local church is currently engaged, in a post-modern society,

³⁹ Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence*, 70.

⁴⁰ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Communities, The Rise of the Post Congregational Church* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass 2011), 154.

do not seem to be effective in disciple-making or in transformation. The fact that racism still exists in the church means there is lack of true and authentic discipleship.

Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”⁴¹ I believe Jesus was saying to the disciples to have compassion for each other. Frank Rogers, Jr., the Codirector of the Center for Engaged Compassion writes, “Compassion is the heartbeat of humanity.”⁴² As the heartbeat of humanity, I believe our compassion for each other would really help and strengthen the relationships between the pastor and parishioners in cross-cultural settings. Parishioners need to know how to love and have compassion for strangers, in the sense of not knowing about each other’s cultures or backgrounds. Jesus demonstrated his love for strangers as the Bible states, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”⁴³ Being weary and scattered happens when we engage with humanity without true love and concern for others. Rogers writes, “Pausing from the busyness of our lives and recognizing the tender humanity of another restores us to our own humanity. The pulse of care and connection within us resuscitates. Our hearts, normally dulled by the day’s burdens, beat freely with love. And the ensuing kindness we extend to others has the power to resuscitate their spirits as well. For compassion not only restores the heart of our own humanity; its healing care makes human once more the heart of another grown hard and cold.”⁴⁴

Even when a racist or biased person tries to change, it is difficult because it requires inner transformative work. What fuels racist thoughts and behaviors is fear. Fear of loss, fear of

⁴¹ John 13: 34 (NRSV).

⁴² Frank Rogers, Jr., *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville: Fresh Air Books, 2015), 9.

⁴³ Matthew 9:36 (NKJV).

⁴⁴ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 9.

physical violence, fear of change, and the list goes on and on. Fear keeps the Christian from truly loving their neighbor. In a cross-cultural setting, parishioners can deal with their fears as they develop meaningful relationships. The role of the cross-cultural pastor to emphasize loving and care for each other. Frank Rogers agrees. He says, “In the absence of practical guidance, acting compassionately seems like a near impossible ideal. Our angers, fears, drives, and aversions burn with primal power. Without a means to tend to them, we either succumb to shame at our inevitable failures, or we suppress our repulsions, pretend we don’t have them, and force a civility that rings hollow to both others and ourselves.”⁴⁵ Reggie McNeal states that guidance and a deeper self-revelation is needed for effective transformation. He says, “Spiritual disciplines are not a ‘to-do’ list to achieve spiritual maturity. Checklists of spiritual activity cannot in and of themselves be measures of maturity. After all, the Pharisees had checklists but no transformation. Spiritual disciplines are designed to be relational activities. This is the secret of their transformative power. They do their ‘work’ when we engage them in being honest with ourselves and transparent in disclosing ourselves to God. By allowing God access to our ‘secret’ selves, we place ourselves in a position of being transformed. By practicing authenticity with God, we move more and more into an intimate, not just personal, relationship with him. We bring ‘all of ourselves we know to all we know of God.’ We experience his power to deal with our darkest and neediest selves. We are transformed.”⁴⁶

B. Compassion Practice

The effectiveness of a pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting will depend on unifying the congregation to become disciples of Christ and to engage in ministry. For this to happen,

⁴⁵ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 18.

⁴⁶ McNeal, *Missional Communities*, 134.

transformation, as stated, must take place. Following is a spiritual practice that may help with transformation. It is called the Compassion Practice as created by Frank Rogers, Jr.:

This practice—The Compassion Practice—unfolds into layers of intricacy and unveils subtle dynamics of deep transformative power. Its simplest form, however, has an elegant simplicity.

The Compassion Practice invites us to:

1. Catch your breath (Get grounded). Get some emotional and physical distance in whatever ways you become centered and reconnected with the source of your vitality.
2. Take your PULSE (Cultivate compassion for yourself). Take a U-turn and connect empathically with the cry of the soul hidden within your emotions and impulses.
3. Take the other's PULSE (Cultivate compassion for another). Turn toward the other and connect empathically with the cry of the soul hidden within his or her emotions and behaviors.
4. Decide what to do (Discern compassionate action). Now grounded in compassion—both for yourself and the other—discern those actions that heal the suffering and nurture the flourishing of all parties involved and do them.

These deceptively simple moves hold the secrets to cultivating genuine compassion. They reconnect us to the sources of life and love; they kindle a healing care for ourselves; and they give rise to the loving regard that repairs our relationships. In short, the Compassion Practice restores the heartbeat of our humanity.⁴⁷ The PULSE acronym means the following:

P - Paying attending. Perceiving another's experience with a nonjudgmental, nonreactive clarity.

⁴⁷ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 19.

U - Understanding empathically. Being moved by the sometimes-hidden suffering within that person.

L - Loving with connection. Being filled with and extending an all-embracing care.

S – Sensing the sacredness. Recognizing and savoring the cosmic expanse of compassion that holds and heals all wounds.

E – Embodying new life. Yearning for the restorative flourishing to be birthed within another.⁴⁸

An inward journey, such as the application of the Compassion Practice will allow the individuals to see themselves and others from different perspectives and points of view. Debby Irving states, “How can racism possibly be dismantled until white people, lots and lots of white people, understand it as an unfair system, get in touch with the subtle stories and stereotypes that play in their heads, and see themselves not as good or bad but as players in the system? Until white people embrace the problem, the elephant in the room—all the nasty tension and mistrust that goes with it—will endure. And the feedback efforts of people of color will fall on ignorant ears at best or be misconstrued as too whiney or too angry at worst.”⁴⁹ Instead of fearing the unknown, racists can embrace the truth that God loves all human beings, but again there must be transformation if the kingdom of God is going to grow. Swanson says, “Yet the discipleship journey to redirect our desires toward the reconciliation of the kingdom of God cannot be rushed. Our emotions must be fully engaged. After all, our discipleship paradigm is deeply concerned with our affections and loves. As desiring beings, it is our hearts that need transformation. We

⁴⁸ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 27.

⁴⁹ Irving, *Waking Up White*, 153.

need to feel the impact of our segregation on our lives as well as on the lives of people of color and their communities.”⁵⁰

Strategic Leadership Practices

Pastors in a cross-cultural setting need to have good and authentic leadership skills because of the nuances of cross-cultural ministry. HiRho Park says, “The authentic leader in a cross-racial and cross-cultural context is one who has a clear self-awareness culturally, socially, and politically. This leader has the ability to embrace ‘both-and’ cultural fluidity and exercises a people-centered leadership with integrity, meaning that he or she makes the needs of others a priority. For example, RE-CR-CC (Racial Ethnic-Cross-Racial-Cross-Cultural) lead pastors are creating their own authentic leadership styles by synthesizing their distinctive cluster of cultural ideas and theological understandings. For RE CR-CC lead pastors, being an authentic leader means being vulnerable; their presence and a different leadership style shatters ethnocentrism and opens us a new possibility among their followers. Their vulnerability challenges the congregation and many times leads them to a spiritual transformation toward a new and different future for the church.”⁵¹ Because of this, below are an unique blend of leadership practices to make the cross-cultural pastor an effective cultural leader:

1. Lead members to Christ at all times -The goal is to lead members to Christ to become disciples of Jesus and to be in fellowship with each other so that the ministry can be productive. Have a strong faith in God and follow the example of Jesus in love. Seek the Holy Spirit for leadership guidance. Study the Bible, participate in the lives of your congregants as Jesus did with his disciples and engage in ministry. HiRho Park says, “Jesus was intentional about putting

⁵⁰ Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, 45.

⁵¹ Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence*, 49.

people's needs in the center of his ministry; and thus, he also makes a theological statement about God's grace."⁵²

2. Lead by example - Because of the sensitive nature of cross-cultural ministry, it is important for the pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting to model the behavior they want the church members to follow. The greatest example we have of a leader who led by example was Jesus the Christ. He was the prototype, the perfect model who said and demonstrated what he wanted the disciples to do. Jesus told the disciples to "follow me." A prominent leader in the world of leadership, John C. Maxwell, author of *Leadership* talks about the importance of leading by example. He says, "All people with leadership ability have one perspective in common: before and more. They see things *before* other people do, and they see *more* than other people do. However, what sets great leaders apart from all other leaders is this: they *act before* others and they do *more* than others. Great leaders face their uncertainty and doubt, and they move through it to pave the way for others. And because they are willing to pay the price first and often pay more than others do, they can say with moral authority, 'Follow me.'"⁵³

3. Communicate in a language everyone understands - Cross-cultural pastors should not speak in a language that everyone in the room does not understand. For example, an Asian pastor has been appointed an English-Asian congregation. English is the second language for the pastor. Periodically, the Asian congregants communicate in their language with the pastor. The English-speaking congregants normally are uncomfortable when the pastor and Asian congregants communicate in their presence. Because they do not understand what is being said and no one

⁵² Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence*, 58.

⁵³ John C. Maxwell, *Leadership: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace* (New York City: HarperCollins Leadership, 2019), 68-69.

translates the conversation, the English speakers feel it is disrespectful when others do not speak English in their presence. In this case, the pastor must speak in English the moment the English speaker is present to model the behavior that the pastor wants the congregants to do. Cross-cultural pastors have to adapt to their new surroundings and be conscious of the feelings of all congregants. Cross-cultural pastors have to engage in what Maxwell teaches: “Leadershift is the ability and willingness to make a leadership change that will positively enhance organizational and personal growth.”⁵⁴ Cross-cultural leaders need to be able to change and adapt to their environment as they go in and out of cultural nuances. Maxwell teaches, “If you want to be successful as a leader, you need to learn to become comfortable with uncertainty and make shifts continually. You need to be flexible and deal with uncertainty without losing focus. Leaders who leadershift must be like water. They have to be fluid. Water finds a way, then makes a way. First it changes with its circumstances. The environment dictates the change.”⁵⁵

4. Treat everyone the same and do not show favoritism – Pastors in cross-culture ministry settings should not show favoritism, especially, if one’s own culture is a part of the congregation. Do not choose sides, never argue, listen and debate. Refer to the Bible and respond to how Jesus would handle a situation. Be neutral. Some congregants are waiting for the cross-cultural pastor to choose a side to find a reason to accuse the pastor of favoritism. Do not give congregants ammunition to sabotage your work. Do not share your political party affiliation with the church members and pray for all leaders, regardless of political party affiliation. Remember there are three sides to every story, the two persons sides and the truth. Stick to the truth.

⁵⁴ Maxwell, *Leadershift*, 4.

⁵⁵ Maxwell, *Leadershift*, 6.

5. Get to know your parishioners before making changes. Meet with the members in a manner of their choice. Be authentic in learning about their culture. Ken Walden speaks to this point. He says, “Effective pastoral leaders gather data about their soon-to-be parishioners’ culture(s) before they arrive and begin their ministry. It is advantageous for the incoming pastor to be familiar with the congregation’s demographics.”⁵⁶ Regarding the Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups, the pastor should take special consideration in learning about them and try to not confuse one particular group with another within the broader culture. For example, do not call Tongans Fijians or Filipinos Chinese. Be clear about who everyone is. Walden agrees stating, “Acquiring accurate information is essential for effective pastoral leadership. When the pastor lacks knowledge of the culture(s), his or her attempts may be unproductive at best; at worst, such attempts may end up being terribly harmful.”⁵⁷

6. Works towards leadership unity in all situations. Pastors in a cross-cultural ministry setting must understand the power of unity and work toward creating it in all that they do. Cedrick Bridgeforth shares his experience and says,

In my most recent pastoral appointment I was assigned to serve as Lead Pastor of what was labeled as a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-site congregation. It was all the plus twenty other labels that would work in defining the congregation. There were two campuses located 1.2 miles apart. On one campus there were three worshipping groups (English, Khmer, and Spanish) and on the other campus there were two worshipping groups (Tagalog and Tongan). Prior to my arrival it seemed that in order to unify this congregation we would need to begin worshipping together at once and dispense with all the culturally specific elements of these groups. You can imagine those discussions did not go very far and they were not well received. There were attempts to combine services and to eliminate some activities, but it was obvious that the more leadership tried to limit or prevent an activity, more activities sprang up and there was no end in sight. One of the first commitments I made as the Lead Pastor, was to build a pastoral and program staff leadership team that would function as one unit. We needed a unified leadership effort if

⁵⁶ Walden, *Practical Theology for Church Diversity*, 23.

⁵⁷ Walden, *Practical Theology for Church Diversity*, 45.

we were to have any change of creating a plan that would lead us to fulfilling a vision of a truly multi-ethnic and completely healthy congregation.⁵⁸

7. The pastor in a cross-cultural setting facilitates annual leadership retreats – The pastor in a cross-cultural setting should plan to have one or two leadership retreats a year. There are three main reasons to gather for a retreat. First, the retreats bring all the leaders together to plan the work of the church. Second, it is a time to grow in their relationships with each other. Third, for cultural competency training. The retreats create an environment of camaraderie, allow for ideas to develop and planning to occur. The more time a diverse group of believers spend together, the more they will realize they are more in common than not. Because of this revelation, the thought to dislike each other or commit acts of racism against the pastor or other congregants will soon decrease. The retreat should have a spiritual formation component which will continue the work of transforming hearts.

⁵⁸ Cedrick Bridgeforth, *20/20 Leadership Lessons, Seeing Visions and Focusing on Reality* (Los Angeles: 323 Publications, 2017), 56-57.

Chapter 3 – Theological and Conceptual Stance of Cross-Cultural Ministry

The theological perspectives of a pastor in a cross-cultural ministry are derived from biblical foundations. In both the Old and New Testaments, we learn about who God is and of God's relationship with God's people. The first book of the Bible tells the story about our Creator God, Elohim and the creation story. After creating the universe, the earth, the vegetation and animals, God created humankind. In Genesis, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness."⁵⁹ We may take this to mean that humankind reflects or possesses some aspects of the divine. The Scripture that follows is, "God saw everything that he made, and indeed, it was very good."⁶⁰ This Scripture informs us that God's intent for creation was to endow it with goodness. Soong-Chan Rah states, "The Bible tells the story of God at work in the world. The history of God's work is worth investigating, understanding, and repeating. The refrain "Remember" is repeated throughout the Old Testament. It is the call of God for His people to learn from His revelation. The Israelites were called to a memory that would strengthen their understanding and appreciation of the God of history. Because of the oral tradition of the Old Testament, we find frequent retelling of events so the recipients of God's Word could impress these matters on their hearts."⁶¹

In the story of creation, we are reminded that God created humanity to be in relationship with God and with each other. The Ten Commandments are laws calling the children of Israel to love and respect God and each other. These laws were designed to establish a godly and holy society, so that the children of Israel would demonstrate to the world the benefits and blessings

⁵⁹ Genesis 1:26a (NRSV).

⁶⁰ Genesis 1:31 (NRSV).

⁶¹ Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors, Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*, 42.

of having relationships under the lordship of God. Under this Mosaic covenant the people would demonstrate their devotion to God and do no harm in their relationship with each other.

In the New Testament writings, Jesus stated the commandments were condensed into two Commandments reminding his followers to love God and love others. The Gospel writer records that a lawyer tested Jesus with a question:

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” ⁶² We can derive from the Scriptures, that humanity is created in the image of God, and called into covenant with God, to love and be devoted to God, and to love one another. It is within this framework that cross-cultural ministries are designed and implemented.

Cultural Differences Highlighted in Selected Biblical Texts

There were many nationalities in the Ancient Near East that were recorded in the Old Testament writings. The Old Testament records varying cultures that were established from the lineage of Adam and his offspring. For example, in the book of Ruth, a famine forced a man from Bethlehem in Judah to live in the land of Moab where his sons marry Moabite women. The story tells of people of different cultures loving each other and being in relationship with each other. Ruth is a Moabite, who married into a family of Jewish culture. After the death of her husband, she being a foreigner, relocated with her mother-in-law Naomi and subsequently married Boaz and gave birth to a child. “They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of

⁶² Matthew 22:36-40 (NRSV).

David.”⁶³ In the story of Ruth, we see relationships that are built across cultures, relationships that endure famine, lead to marriage, survive the grief over the loss of loved ones, prove to be resilient through widowhood, and ultimately result in new beginnings. It is a story that might help us to work through some of the challenges of cross-cultural ministry. Pastors in cross-cultural ministry settings need to emphasize the biblical teachings regarding cross-cultural living and God’s perspective on loving all people.

Jesus’ first public sermon was offered in his hometown of Nazareth. The sermon states why Jesus was present and what Jesus was called to do. The sermon says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”⁶⁴ This message is good news to all people and not for a select few. During the time of Jesus, the Jewish culture did not regard the Gentiles or Samaritans or others to be worthy or counted among those who were invited to have a relationship with God and receive the benefits and blessings of that relationship. Jesus’ ministry demonstrated a different perspective.

In recording one of Jesus’ healing stories, the Gospel writer is intentional in pointing out the woman’s ethnicity. "The woman was a Greek, Syrophenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast out the demon out of her daughter. Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs". And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs. Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your

⁶³ Ruth 4:17b (NRSV).

⁶⁴ Luke 4:18-19 (NRSV).

daughter. ""⁶⁵ The Gospel writer leaves no doubt that Jesus, a Jewish rabbi engaged in cross-cultural conversation and a healing ministry that involved a Greek woman of Syrophoenician heritage. After much discussion about healing Jews, the covenant people, Jesus healed the woman's daughter because of her request with faith. The message of the gospel and faith in God overrides prejudice.

Jesus met with a Samaritan woman at the well as recorded in the book of John 4:1-26. In verse nine, "Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Jesus and the Samaritan have an intimate conversation about her relationships and worshiping in spiritual truth. Jesus identifies Himself to her as the Messiah and again crosses boundaries and interacts cross-culturally. Jesus showed that all can have a relationship with God through salvific love. Regarding the ministry of Jesus, McSpadden writes, "Jesus' ministry speaks powerfully to the realities and challenges facing clergy and laypersons in churches that are involved in a cross-cultural-cross-racial experience. Like our world today, the world of Jesus was multicultural and divided by religion, class, education, gender and nationality. It was a dangerous environment, characterized by Roman occupation, guerrilla warfare, religious unrest, oppression, and poverty."⁶⁶

The United Methodist Church has recognized the cultural diversity in its congregations and among the clergy leadership. The role of the pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting is to unite the cultures under one roof, with the hope of uniting them to do ministry together, effectively and efficiently. In many cases, it really depends on the attitude and opinion of the

⁶⁵ Mark 7:26-29 (NKJV).

⁶⁶ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 7.

dominant culture regarding sharing the facilities with people of different cultures. As a pastor in a cross-cultural ministry setting, I have pastored predominately European American churches who have shared their facilities with other cultures. Some churches have been supportive and others have not. Occasionally, there has been an opinion expressed by the church allowing “foreigners to use our church.” Such a perspective disregards the grace of God, our common humanity that reaches across cultures and what it means to be the church for all peoples, races, cultures, and languages. Sometimes the thinking is based on the notion that “others are unclean.”

Church members struggle in their identity regarding shared facilities as they become more diverse in their journey to become inclusive. McSpadden points to the challenges experienced by the early church to reach out to the gentile world. She states, “This infant church’s struggle to be faithful to God in a multicultural world is captured poignantly in the story of Peter’s vision (Acts 10: 9-23). In the vision, Peter, who insisted on the Jewish identity of the early church, was challenged to eat foods forbidden by observant Jews. He responded, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.’ The voice said to him again, a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane’” (Acts 10:14-15).⁶⁷ Biased church members need to understand that God created everyone and no human has the right to refer to anyone as being unclean or unworthy. McSpadden continues, “The vision led Peter to a brave action that caused a boundary to be renegotiated. Emboldened by the vision, he does something unheard of for a Jew of his time: he visits the home of a Gentile, Cornelius. Addressing the crowd, Peter says, ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right and acceptable to him. You know the

⁶⁷ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 7.

message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus—he is Lord of all” (Acts 10:34-36).⁶⁸

The hope is that through situations involving shared facilities, the body of Christ can become more inclusive. It has been a struggle, but positive results have occurred as the dominant culture gets older and the younger people of color are allowed to serve by caring for the facilities. As cultures use the facility together, they have the opportunity to get to know each other and work together in ministry. It is the role of the cross-cultural pastor to take the initiative to assure relationships are developed and are productive.

The idea of Christians of different cultural backgrounds being together in one place is not a new idea. In fact, that is how the church began at Pentecost. The book of Acts says,

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya

⁶⁸ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries*, 7.

belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”⁶⁹

Cross-cultural ministry works when everyone works in unity. The church continues to work toward this goal because Christians are called to serve and live in this manner. Scripture teaches us the importance of unity because it is God’s will to be a unified body of Christ. In the letter to the Ephesian believers, the apostle states, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Acts 2:1-11 (NRSV).

⁷⁰ Ephesians 4:1-6 (NRSV).

Chapter 4

The Research Project

The primary goal of this research project is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments of pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) of the United Methodist Church in the areas of pastor-parishioner relationships, acceptance, congregation development, leadership practices and inclusivity.

Methodology

The project was designed to collect information through a series of interviews and surveys with clergy, lay persons, cross-cultural trainers and District Superintendents were invited to complete a survey and to engage in interviews in order to determine what was working or not in cross-cultural appointments in the California-Nevada Annual Conference. The ultimate goal is to discern what is working and what is not working with the appointments, applaud the successes and develop new strategies to address concerns or shortcomings of cross-cultural appointments.

The respondents to the survey consisted of clergy and laity who answered questions developed by my advisor and myself. The surveys were created with open-ended questions to allow the participants to expound upon their experiences. The questions are in Appendix 4.

The interviewees consisted of a diverse group of clergy and lay people in the Conference. The survey responses represent four out of five Districts in the Conference. Everyone was informed that their identities would be kept confidential and the survey was designed that way. I contacted clergy who were in cross-cultural appointments as well as laity who previously or currently had a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment. I sent out an email to my church members asking them to complete the survey for my doctoral program. I asked in our

worship service for members to fill out the survey for me. The majority of my leadership team and parishioners completed the survey. The members of my church have had several cross-cultural pastors.

I used Google survey for the surveys. Because of the data collection method, I had to transcribe the data to analyze it effectively. I had to re-write the data and group the responses. It took nearly five days to transcribe the survey data and I have two composition books with notes with the data and from the phone interviews. With the telephone interviews, I called the clergy and asked the questions and wrote down the answers in a notebook.

This is a pertinent sample from a diverse group of clergy and laity in the California-Nevada Annual Conference. The first set of questions were identity questions and clergy/laity and the cultural background of the congregation served. There are twenty-two questions for the clergy and thirteen questions for the laity.

Survey Results and Analysis

A. Clergy Survey

My first public announcement to clergy was during a Bishop's meeting where I invited clergy to participate in my project. The Bishop offered support and advice. I reached out to other clergy that I had developed relationships with over the years. They were asked to participate by email and through Zoom. Most clergy knew me as a cross-cultural trainer, sat with me on Conference boards, and worked with me in leadership roles throughout the Conference. They readily responded to my request for their input.

Clergy were informed that the surveys (See Appendix 2) could be completed by email, but they could also be interviewed by telephone. Several clergypersons preferred to be interviewed by telephone instead of completing the survey online. I informed them that I was not recording their answers but was taking notes. One clergy said, "I could say what I want because you are not recording me." Most clergy did expound on their answers during the telephone interviews which led to interesting conversations. Some clergy wanted to give examples of the problems at the church and some wanted to share information that was totally confidential about a particular layperson's behavior.

Fifteen clergy completed the survey and interviews, including two cross-cultural trainers two District Superintendents and two pastors who were interviewed regarding their experiences of pastoring a church of their own culture versus pastoring a cross-cultural church. The clergy were eager to share their stories about their cross-cultural pastoral experiences knowing that the information would be kept confidential. The soft deadline for the responses to the survey was a week because of the nature of pastoral work. I felt that a short timeline would be better than a

longer one. Most adhered to the deadline. Currently, according to the Conference staff, there are thirteen cross-cultural appointments in the Conference. The California-Nevada Annual Conference has been appointing cross-cultural clergy to pastoral appointments for a very long time. The majority of clergy surveyed have been in cross-cultural appointments for over ten years. Two of the clergy have been appointed for less than one year. The clergy that responded were of African-descent, Asian and Pacific Islander. There were five males and ten females who completed the survey and participated in the interviews. The cultural backgrounds of the churches are diverse. Some of the congregations have a Caucasian/white majority with a minority group of Filipino, Tongan, African American/black, Fijian, Hispanic, Japanese, or Chinese members. There was one church that was predominately Caucasian and one that was predominately Asian. Another church had bi-cultural groups.

Two of the clergy are newly appointed cross-cultural pastors. Six of the clergy had training before their appointment and seven did not. It made a difference if you had training before the appointment. Performing research on the church is vital before going into a cross-cultural appointment. The majority performed research before starting their job by reading the Conference journal statistics, talking with predecessors, doing a physical site visit, researching the cultures in the church and how their churches operated in their country versus the United States. One clergyperson stated that attending a predominately white seminary was the preparation needed to serve at a cross-cultural church. The educational experience showed the clergy how serving in the United Methodist Church would be. Others prepared for the appointment by praying to God for guidance and engaging in spiritual disciplines. A couple of the clergy were appointed at the last minute and were unable to prepare for the new appointment.

Twelve of the clergy felt they were called to be a cross-cultural pastor and two did not. The two felt they would be more effective serving a congregation of their own culture context. It is important to know if a clergyperson feels called to cross-cultural ministry. It would be an easier assignment because of the help of the Holy Spirit and being equipped for the role. A survey question asked what the clergyperson's gifts and graces were. Clergy stated that love is the primary virtue in pastoring cross-culturally. They also developed a list of gifts that contribute to clergy effectiveness: good written and verbal communication skills, bilingual skills, familial experiences, flexibility, adaptability, diplomatic skills, humility, transparency, leadership and administration. Since the pastor in a cross-cultural setting is at a disadvantage because they are not the culture of the congregation, it is important to use all of one's gifts. The pastor has to perform at a high level to be accepted by the congregation. In some cases, the pastor has to be exceptionally talented to be accepted.

The survey revealed the majority of the clergy were welcomed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the congregation. Most stated that they were warmly received. One clergy stated that with two previous appointments, the Staff Parish Committees were confused about the appointment because the take-in was not handled properly. One pastor was not welcome. This question revealed that overall, most pastors in cross-cultural appointments are well received.

One of survey questions asked if any of the members left the church because of the cross-cultural pastoral appointment. Clergy stated that people left, but not necessarily because of the appointment. Some left and came back. Some left for other reasons. It is a known response regarding new pastors from members regardless if they are cross-cultural. Church members may not like the preaching style, the personality or the decision-making process of pastor. Most

members stay and if language is an issue, may complain about the language of the clergy. One clergy stated that the congregation had a problem with his accent which resulted in some of the members leaving the church.

Another question asked about the challenges the cross-cultural pastor faced. First, is the isolation felt by clergy when assigned to a cross-cultural rural church. This appointment takes clergy away from their family, culture and needed support. This is a serious problem that can cause emotional and physical illness for the clergy.

When the cross-cultural pastoral appointment places the clergyperson in a mission area to serve persons from other cultures as well as his/her culture, the clergyperson sometimes experiences a sense of alienation and a lack of respect from persons of his/her culture. In a bi-cultural or multi-cultural setting, church members sometimes expect that the pastor would favor the members who share the pastor's cultural background and when the pastor does not the disappointment leads to suspicion and lack of respect. It is common for a pastor in a cross-cultural setting to face problems from members who share their cultural background because they cannot show favoritism towards them and have to treat all church members the same.

Both the pastor and the congregation experience a learning curve, says one clergy. Another clergy said it was challenging to navigate the dynamics of a "bi-cultural" situation, which is more difficult than a multicultural situation. In this situation the pastor is put in the middle when conflict arises and is challenged by both cultural groups to choose a side. Another issue was dealing with the assumptions that churches have regarding the role of a pastor and their idea or image of a pastor. For many members, their image was that of an older white male father figure. In cross-cultural appointments, many of the pastors are women. Women in cross-cultural appointments may experience gender and/or racial discrimination. One clergyperson said she

faced the “double whammy” and did not know if being a woman and/or a person of color triggered the racism or sexism exhibited by the congregants. I recall that when I first became a pastor, a white male colleague told me that I was getting hit twice, being a person of color and a woman in a white and male dominated profession.

Another question asked if the clergy experienced disrespect, intolerance, racism, bigotry from members of the congregation and/or from the community. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of disrespect, intolerance, racism or bigotry. Some clergy experienced bold bigotry from Caucasian people who blatantly stated that because of the pastor’s nationality, they could not attend church or receive a pastoral visit. There were white congregants who indicated that the pastor being “different” was something they could not overcome. During a phone interview, a clergyperson related an interesting story about a process that occurs with church members regarding pastors when English is their second language. Upon learning that English is the second language of the incoming pastor, the members would go to the website of the church where the pastor was currently serving and listen to their sermons to see if they could understand them. If the members understood the diction of the pastor, then they would be willing to accept the pastor. If not, they would protest the appointment. This is the first time I have heard of this practice. The clergyperson who shared it with me said it is a common practice that is mainly performed with Asian pastors. This is a shrewd way of handling the language issue, which is a very big issue with cross-cultural pastoral appointments. It may not be the right way to handle the language issue, but the process is understandable. It is perhaps, a way for the pastor to know what to expect when accepting the appointment. The hope the clergy person shared with me is that the members learn to love, help, and get acquainted with the new pastor before judging their verbal communication skills. There reports of pastors of different

ethnic groups being asked to write out their sermons, then a layperson would read and correct the English in the sermon before the message is preached on Sunday morning. Hopefully after all the preparation, the sermon changes the hearts of the listeners to be as compassion and loving like Jesus, in their relationship with the pastor.

Another issue is trust. Cross-cultural pastors are not immediately trusted by the congregation, especially by the leadership of the church. One clergy is working hard to gain the trust of the congregation. She is new in her role and the congregants are not accustomed to seeing or knowing people of color in positions of authority or leadership. In these situations, the perception of congregants may be shaped only by television or other cultural stereotypes. The pastor stated that one Caucasian congregant said, “we are happy that you are not loud and not like the women on *Real Housewives of Atlanta*.” Apparently, the member has not had meaningful interaction with women of color, and therefore, the member relied on television characters to learn about their new pastor.

The next question asks: Do you feel that the racial, ethnic or cultural dynamics within your congregation have improved since you have been the pastor? Most clergy answered in the affirmative. They also indicated that cross-cultural appointments have positive benefits to both the clergy and the congregation and that parishioners need to get to know the pastor as a person regardless of their nationality and/or gender. The pastor in a cross-cultural setting brings diversity to the church, but it does not necessarily make the church inclusive. Some Caucasian members think that when a cross-cultural pastor is appointed to the church, their membership will grow with people from the nationality of the pastor. This is not necessarily the case. It has been my experience white churches with African American pastors do not necessarily attract African American people. African American congregants who experience racism during the

week do not want to experience it on Sunday when worshipping the Lord. On the other hand, race relations may change over time. The congregation has the opportunity to learn about the love of God and how God loves all people, not just certain ones. One clergy stated that the experience in a cross-cultural context helped in learning about the reality of diversity.”

Improvement in race relations points to one benefit that can accrue from cross-cultural appointments. The appointment helps the different cultures learn about each other and the comfort level increases over time. Some church members fear cross-cultural interactions with a pastor. However, once the members get to know and work with the pastor, some of the fears usually begin to dissipate. One pastor stated that the congregation learned to enjoy and celebrate their differences. Another pastor felt cultural awareness is growing in the church and another stated that God is calling the church to diversify and to learn from each other.

The results regarding some of vital signs measurements of the church before and after the cross-cultural pastor was appointed were positive and encouraging. Some of measurements are the worship attendance, membership, small group growth, and financial information. This data is collected to see if the church is prospering. Several churches were declining when the pastor arrived and became stable and vital under the leadership of the cross-cultural pastor.

There are stories about “white flight” from the churches due to racism. I recently was informed about a situation when a Pacific Islander pastor was appointed to a church in a predominately Caucasian area. Because of the appointment, some of the Caucasian members left the church. However, the church did not die and actually, the opposite happened. People of the same cultural background as the pastor joined the church and the church and pastor prospered with growth in all vital areas. Based on my conversations with Pacific Islander pastors, this phenomenon is common in cross-cultural contexts when the pastor is a Pacific Islander.

Pastors were asked what kind of challenges they experienced in cross-cultural appointments and evangelism and mission were the most popular responses. Evangelism is difficult, even if you are not in a cross-cultural appointment. Sharing the good news of the gospel can be very challenging, especially if members do not want the community or friends to know the race and ethnicity of their “new” pastor. Some people fear that their congregation will soon be populated by and taken over by people who share the same racial, ethnic or cultural background of their pastor. This is a myth. Most of the churches do not see drastic changes and remain the same, except for those that experience “white flight.”

Pastors were asked if the broader community in which they were ministering was accepting of them serving in a cross-cultural appointment. Pastors overall were accepted by the community. Pastors joined community organizations such as, but not limited to, Rotary, Interfaith organizations, social justice groups and pastor’s networking fellowship groups. Pastors were sought out by some groups upon hearing that they were appointed to the church to show their support, especially when they were a pastor of color or new to the area. A couple of pastors new to their appointments were unable to reach out to the community due to Covid-19.

The last two questions on the survey had detailed answers about the present and future state of cross-cultural appointments. The first question asked, “Within the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) of the United Methodist Church, do you feel that cross-cultural appointments are a good idea or problematic? Some of the responses are:

1. Evaluate the situation before appointing a pastor to a cross-cultural appointment. Know the congregation’s spiritual formation and love for all people or know if it will be a toxic environment. Sometimes it is a good idea and sometimes it is not.

2. Yes, it is a good idea. Jesus came to serve the whole world. Jesus came to serve all people.
3. It depends on the wisdom and experience of the appointed pastor and it depends upon the congregation.
4. Yes, it is a good idea because diversity is the reality of the world.
5. I think they are problematic in some instances because congregations that are all white and privileged feel, in my opinion, that because they didn't have the option to choose a non-white leader that they do not have to continue to serve the church or support the church financially.
6. Depending on the receptivity of the church, I think that cross-cultural appointments can be a good idea. The only way we can learn and grow with greater knowledge of each other's cultures is to be willing to present ourselves in authenticity and an openness to learn.
7. There is not much choice for folks to NOT be in cross-cultural appointments, given the ethnicity of our Ordinands in the past few years. The leadership of the Annual Conference doesn't seem to take this reality seriously. There is no agreed-upon program to offer cross-cultural competency. That says to me that it isn't a priority, even though all that we see would tell us that it's necessary and increasingly critical.

The last question of the clergy survey stated, “What advice would you give the Bishop or Cabinet regarding cross-cultural appointments? Following are several responses to the question:

1. Provide cultural training for the congregation.
2. Assign the cross-cultural pastor as an associate pastor with an experienced and successful cross-cultural pastor.
3. Support the transition for both the pastor and the congregation and provide training and knowledge for both.
4. Keep the cross-cultural training going.
 - a. Require the DS visit cross-cultural appointments in their District regularly.
 - b. Let the cross-cultural appointees host a cross-cultural training.
 - c. It would be helpful if all material used for training would be translated into other languages.
5. Much prayer and consideration need to take place in regard to appointments such as mine where not only have they never had a black pastor but they never had any black church members as well. I feel overwhelmed that I feel an additional stress in how I make my requests, ask questions, or make decisions because some will feel as if I am uppity, or somehow not easy to get along with. It is not just the issue of skin color, but a whole other cultural context that has to be looked at. I would never talk to my pastor or any pastor the way that some have talked to me. I am not saying that it is not possible, but just appointing someone, especially a first appointment in a cross-cultural charge should be done where adequate introductions and discussions can be done effectively.

6. Set a Staff position designated to this—even if it’s a half-time position – that is designed to deal with cross-cultural appointments. Otherwise, those of us placed in such settings are left to figure it out on our own—which we’ll do, by God’s grace, but if this is important to the church, take it seriously and offer the leadership it requires. Currently, our words and our actions don’t match; we “celebrate diversity” without resources that say we expect ALL of us to respect that diversity and to be skilled in moving within our rich cross-cultural contexts.
7. Please do not place pastors in appointments where they can be wounded by unloving congregations, i.e. liberal pastors in conservative churches. Do not place pastors in communities where they are too far from their support, their culture, food, etc. Please ensure both pastors and congregations have some type of cultural awareness training either before the appointment or as soon as possible after the appointment has started.
8. It is best not to waste the talents and gifts of pastors who could serve at another appointment and thrive, then to have a pastor serve where the church does not want the pastor or is constantly undermining the pastor or creating havoc for the pastor and the pastor’s family.
9. Without appropriate support and resources, they have the potential to be challenging, undermining and unfruitful for the pastor and the church.
10. Know the needs of the local church and have an open dialogue with the congregation about the cross-cultural appointment.

Other responses centered around being cognizant of the needs of the pastor, instituting training mechanisms for both the pastor and the congregation before the pastor is appointed to the church. Clergy also stated that it is important to let the congregation know in advance about the cross-cultural appointment, so that whatever concerns the congregation has, can be dealt with before the pastor arrives. Also, since we are in a Covid-19 pandemic, be conscious of trying not to move pastors, especially to new cross-cultural appointments. It is already a difficult transition and becomes even more difficult when you cannot meet with the parishioners in person.

B. Laity Survey

The laity survey consisted of twelve questions. (See Appendix 3). As in the clergy survey, most of the questions are open-ended. The first three questions are identity questions. The surveys were completed by Caucasian/white, African American/black, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Japanese, Korean, Hispanic, Multi-racial, Tongan and Fijian laity. The laity represented two churches in one district. The majority of the laity have had one or more cross-cultural clergy as pastors. The laity preferred to respond to the online survey anonymously and did not want to be interviewed. Thirty-one laity responded to the survey.

The laity responded with positive results and praise for cross-cultural pastoral appointments. The laity felt that their churches prospered because of the appointment. The membership, worship attendance, and financial situations increased because of the cross-cultural appointment.

1. Benefits

The interviewees felt that one of the most valuable benefits obtained from a cross-cultural pastor is the opportunity to learn and understand other cultures. The cross-cultural appointment allows the pastor and congregation to learn new ways of being in a loving relationship with each

other and learn new ways, according to one's culture, how to work together administratively and perform ministry together. Engagement in different points of view and diversity growth were important to the laity. Leadership, cultural competency, spiritual formation and preaching skills were also important. Some stated that their church is always open and welcoming to cross-cultural pastors. Regarding discriminatory behaviors, a few sensed some members of their congregation were sexist and homophobic and political. Overall, the appointment of a cross-cultural pastor was a good decision because the pastor was effective in leading the church in its ministries, financial growth, building projects, and spiritual formation. The pastor created inclusivity among the multi-cultural church.

2. Challenges

The question regarding challenges covered several areas. The first is language. Language is a very important issue with cross-cultural appointments. The church is a learning and teaching institution, so the ability to communicate is vital to the success of the pastoral and congregational relationship. When language is an issue, unfortunately there will be misunderstandings, misinterpretations, preaching glitches and leadership style troubles. Difference was second in the challenges. Difference in how the cross-cultural pastor was raised, the do's and don'ts in relationships and the church, and if it is monocultural, the church members have to adjust to the cross-cultural pastor's style. Laity feels it is important for the cross-cultural pastor to be able to relate to the congregation. The pastor needs to know the historical background of the church and the cultural background of the membership. Other challenges include such things as: the pastor's leadership approach, older church members not accepting of a cross-cultural pastor, members' desire to have a pastor from their native land, and some congregants not willing or open to change.

Below are responses from the laity regarding what they would say to the Bishop regarding cross-cultural pastoral appointments:

1. It is helpful to have a pastor with experience in bridging the differences among members of the congregation. In this regard, I think it is sometimes helpful to consider having a pastor whose background is different from that of the predominant ethnic/racial backgrounds in the congregation.
2. Make congregations work harder and more intentionally at thinking about issues of gender, race and culture. Encourage us to be world citizens, to think globally and act locally. Do not just assume that because you sent us a pastor whose background is different from the membership, that that alone will make everyone more cross-cultural. We sorely need to learn the definition of 'who is my neighbor' first and foremost by understanding one another within the church community itself, and also by trying to participate more in the life of the neighborhood where God has placed us.
3. Cross-cultural appointments can be an important part of a living, active Christian community that reaches beyond cultural boxes and stereotypes. Due to the Filipino-centric words, actions, and bias of a previous pastoral appointment, I felt like an outsider in a Filipino church. The appointment was presumed to be a good "match" for all. It was not. Cross-cultural appointments need self-reflective pastors with a good cultural understanding of their own personal perspective and biases, that of their congregants, and intentional words and actions that build an inclusive community. Such appointments can help congregations grow in Christian love and understanding but take continued intentional work on the part of all: Bishop, Cabinet, appointments, and congregations.

4. I really enjoy worshiping together as different cultures under the leadership of a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment.
5. Although members should be open, I think some people relate better to those who are from the same cultural [background].
6. That pastors are not just their culture but have specific gifts and graces that need to fit with the congregational style. It is not enough just to have representation of one of the majority cultures in the congregation.
7. As a Caucasian, I can say we as a group are challenged by learning new names and truly interacting with our cross- cultural brothers and sisters. By this I mean eating lunch with others, praying with others, getting to know each other more in depth. It may be the same for the other cultures but as a member of the "white privilege" group I believe I/we need to try harder to bridge the gap.

C. Cross-cultural Trainers Interviews

I interviewed two cross-cultural trainers and asked them to give me five points regarding the challenges of cross-cultural appointments. (See Appendix 4). The first trainer offered the following observations:

1. The dominant culture leadership is not willing to relinquish power to a pastor of color.
2. If your culture is not set up in a Euro-centric manner, you are automatically excluded.
3. Congregations are not prepared for a cross-cultural pastor.
4. Often the white church does not understand the full effects of racism.

5. It is mind-boggling and unbelievable when members say they love their cross-cultural pastor and then turn around and perform racist acts against their pastor.

Regarding the concerns about cross-cultural appointments, the trainer stated that those responsible for the appointment process should consider the impact the appointment has on the family. It is stressful, especially for Black people and their kids. Also, cross-cultural work needs to be done before the pastor arrives.

The second cross-cultural competency trainer offered comments from a different perspective. I asked if the appointment of a cross-cultural pastor will create an inclusive church. The trainer stated:

1. It will take the concerted effort and work of the pastor and the congregation to move towards having a fully inclusive church. It must be a team effort.
2. The creation of an inclusive church should be the vision/mission of the church because the Bible calls us to unite the Jew and Gentile.

When asked what practices the cross-cultural pastor should engage in to be effective, the trainer said the cross-cultural pastor should engage in the spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer, be a learner and not just a teacher, and do training before and during the appointment. The advice the trainer would give is based on relationships. Love the people, get to know the people, and establish your own relationships with the people and to be gentle with yourself. The

trainer also stated that the cross-cultural pastor should learn all points of view regarding cultural situations because there is no one story about cultural competency.

I interviewed pastors who have pastored churches of both their own culture and cross-cultural contexts (See Appendix 4). There was no real preference for one over the other, but the leadership style and worship experiences were different. One pastor felt that returning to their own cultural setting was like a journey that had gone full circle. The other one felt as though returning to their own cultural setting required harder and greater effort. The clergy said, “At times, it felt like the “prophet was not respected in their own home.” However, the pastor was glad to be back in their own community, especially to help the community during the pandemic.

D. District Superintendents Interviews

Two District Superintendents were briefed about my Doctor of Ministry project regarding cross-cultural pastoral appointments and invited to participate in the survey. (See Appendix 4). They both agreed to be interviewed by telephone. I informed them the interviews were confidential and they could speak freely regarding the topic. The questions were based on the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments and if cross-cultural appointments create an inclusive church.

When I asked the first District Superintendent if cross-cultural appointments accomplish the church’s goal to create an inclusive church, the response was a resounding “no” because of the racism in the church. The DS explained that “since we live in a segregated and racist society, racism gets put on full display and will continue until we deal with racist ideas that are grounded in notions of white supremacy.” This DS has faced racism even in a liberal environment. Overtly, the racist comments and behavior have been on display not only from the dominant

culture, but from other ethnic minority groups who have mimicked the values of the dominant culture. The interview ended on a hopeful note about the future of the church.

The next question dealt with the qualities that are important in order for a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment to be effective. The DS believes that effective cross-cultural pastors love the Lord and the people, and they are always open to dialogue about other cultures and engage with and learn about other cultures. It is important for pastors to immerse themselves into the cultures of the church in order to better understand their congregants and relate to them.

In response to the question about the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments the DS observed that in cases where there is no language problem such appointments can generally be effective. Successful cross-cultural appointments are generally marked by the willingness of churches to try harder to become inclusive and also to make meaningful endeavors to build a relationship between the pastor and parishioners. The DS was supportive of the recommendation that the Conference should have a paid staff position to address all the concerns regarding cross-cultural pastoral appointments, including, but not limited to training and mentorship.

The second District Superintendent interview addressed the same questions regarding cross-cultural pastoral appointments, creating an inclusive church and the effectiveness of the process. Drawing on experience in church leadership, the DS observed that generally it is the dominant culture that is really not concerned about making the church inclusive, and in many cases will fight against having a cross-cultural pastor. The DS said sadly, but emphatically, that some white United Methodists are not ready, do not have the cultural sensitivity or cultural competence to engage in a relationship with other cultures. At the same time, many white churches are declining and immigrant churches are growing. Because of this, white churches need help to abandon their racist posture, get sensitivity training, meet others where they are and

develop the compassion and empathy necessary to walk in shoes of others. The DS observed there is joy when a cross-cultural pastoral appointment is working right, and people are willing to work at it. The DS agreed that if linguistics is an issue, such appointments are problematic and are very likely to fail.

In terms of the qualities of an effective pastor in a cross-cultural setting, the DS named humility as the most important quality, followed by teachable spirit. Pastors must also be open to learning about other cultures and must have the ability to think theologically in the contexts of their appointments. The DS explained that different cultures interpret the Bible differently and it is important that the pastors in cross-cultural settings be open to understanding the different interpretations, whether they agree with them or not. As far as the effectiveness of cross-cultural pastoring, the DS noted that it is a great idea for both the pastor and the congregation to have training to become equipped to engage in healthy relationships. The DS also stated to try to stay away from bi-cultural situations as I talked earlier in the clergy survey.

Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

Overall, the data indicates that cross-cultural appointments in the California-Nevada Annual Conference not only work but are also effective. I will address the following areas of effectiveness: pastor-parishioner relationships/acceptance, cultural competency, congregational development, leadership styles and inclusivity.

Relationship development between the pastor and parishioner begins with the introductory meeting with the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Based on the survey most of the Staff Parish Relations Committees were accepting of the pastor and this first step can lead to a positive relationship. After pastors begin their ministry, the congregation's acceptance of the pastor must extend to working with the pastor and growing in their relationships. Pastors know if the introduction to the Staff Parish Relations Committee and to the congregation starts in a negative way, then there may be trouble ahead.

There was general agreement that effectiveness occurs when the pastor has been trained in cultural competency. In this survey, most pastors had been trained, and therefore, the congregations benefitted from the training and perhaps were able to avert conflict. However, both pastors and congregations need continuous training in cultural competency. The training should be designed to take place before the pastor is appointed and before the pastor arrives at the church. The congregation should share with the District Superintendent their concerns about the appointment. The selection process should include the Bishop, Cabinet, the church leadership, and the pastor. Pastors should not be sent to churches where they are not welcomed.

The membership data gathered from the surveys showed that congregational growth had occurred. Most of the churches could be described as stable or vital. The survey showed that even churches that were declining moved into the category of stable or vital after (and possibly due to) the appointment of a cross-cultural pastor. Relationships take time to fully develop and become authentic and meaningful. Once the honeymoon period is over, steps have to be taken to ensure that the necessary work of building the relationship continues between the pastor and the congregation and not devolve into conflict and a return to old habits of racism, bigotry, disrespect and suspicion. The survey results indicate that effective and authentic relationships can be established.

Leadership styles vary with the pastors, but as noted leadership is key to the effectiveness and success of the pastor. Most pastors in cross-cultural appointments have good leadership skills because of on-the-job training situations and cultural competency training. Their leadership styles will vary, but it is important that they do lead and lead by example and learn how to adapt to their specific situations. Cross-cultural appointments do not represent a one size fits all situation.

Cross-cultural pastoring is an effective way to pastor, but more work needs to be done to deal with the issue of racism. Racism is a hindrance to effective cross-cultural appointments and creating an inclusive church. Racism is embedded within our institutions but it first needs to be spiritually deleted from the hearts of congregants. This is necessary if the church is serious about meeting its goals to be an inclusive church. The worship experience needs to include more spiritual practices that are transformative. A concerted effort of the congregants needs to occur to assure attention is paid to equality for all pastors and congregants. Do cross-cultural pastoral appointments create an inclusive church? No, they do not. They create a diverse church, but not

necessarily an inclusive church. The churches are still primarily segregated and are a work in progress. The good news is we are headed in the right direction.

The Next Steps

As we have researched and interviewed pastors and laity about cross-cultural pastoral appointments and ministry, the question is where do we go from here? I will address racism and conclude with ideas on how to proceed and to continue the work of cross-cultural effectiveness. Racism is a sin that is perpetrated in various ways. It is a major hindrance to the effectiveness of cross-cultural pastoring and creating an inclusive church. The 2020 Annual Conference of the California-Nevada Conference addressed this issue and the need for change. The Bishop, Rev. Minerva Carcaño, and the Annual Conference Session team dedicated this annual conference to the exposure and response to racial injustices towards people of color. There was a Black Lives Matter program, and the Bishop used her ordination sermon to expose and address the wrongs against African Americans. The focus of the Conference was exposure of the wrongs to people of color and to start the act of repentance, healing and reconciliation. The Conference Committee on Religion and Race talked about and put forth a plan aimed at righting the wrongs.

Tikiko Lesuma, chair of the Conference Committee on Religion and Race presented a position paper to the Annual Conference that addressed the issue of racism. (See Appendix 5)

The framework for the Conference Commission on Religion and Race is:

1. Expand our understanding of racism beyond personal prejudice and hate to systemic racism.
2. Focus on actions and impacts rather than attitudes and intentions.
3. Add a racial lens to conversations on class, gender, sexuality, etc.

4. Cultivate discourse that centers on the humanity and leadership of people of color.

The framework is a great start and what is planned will address the systemic racism in our Conference. What is also promising are the action steps that have been established to address the four major statements of framework. The steps are:

1. To develop and facilitate webinars aimed at various constituencies of our Conference.

2. To develop and facilitate, via ZOOM, cross-cultural/cross-racial communication workshops. These will be designed to be relevant to various constituencies within our Conference, for example but not limited to, youth, clergy, laypersons, congregational leadership, candidates for ministry, clergy and congregations in cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments. The scheduling of these workshops will be coordinated with the district superintendents, leadership development, congregational development, and conference communications leaders.

3. To work collaboratively with the bishop and the district superintendents in resourcing local churches and pastors in their work of:

- Eliminating racism and racial inequity and intentionally striving to become the beloved community God calls us to be;

- Receiving and welcoming a cross-racial and cross-cultural appointment.

- Sharing facilities with communities of other races and cultures, and who may speak a different language;

- Seeking to faithfully respond to the ministry needs of communities of color. The bishop and her Appointive and Extended Cabinets will meet with the Conference Commission on

Religion and Race twice a year to plan and assure that this work is done intentionally and effectively.

The work of the Conference Committee on Religion and Race is commendable and long overdue to lead and change the church in the areas of race relations. 2020 has brought about a remarkable mandate to address the evils of systemic racism in our church, in our denomination. The Conference has to its credit been proactive in moving an agenda forward in regarding developing training situations for both pastors and parishioners.⁷¹

The church is the leading institution to forge the activity in behavior modification from hate to love and from indifference to compassion. Our identity is shaped and inspired by the teachings of the bible. Our life with God is a spiritual life that needs to be cultivated to the point of a changed heart. Our changed hearts allow us to follow Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This research project revealed strong support for the Conference to establish a staff position focusing on training and mentorship. The position would be designed to work with clergy, congregations, Conference staff, the Bishop and the cabinet. The staff person would determine best practices on a specialized basis due to the number of cultures serving in the Conference. Also, the staff would create mentors and support groups for the clergy to help with problematic situations and for healing from the pain caused by racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. As long as pastors are willing to serve as cross-cultural pastors and congregations are willing to allow them to serve and work with them, then the effectiveness will

⁷¹ Tikiko Lesuma, *Conference Committee on Religion and Race position paper*, (September 19, 2020). The full position paper is Appendix 5.

increase, churches will grow, relationships will prosper and hopefully, the church will become authentically inclusive.

Churches should regularly talk about racism, both on a personal basis and on an institutional level. My congregation has three main ethnic groups and a few other people of color. I am the only African American present at worship services. I noticed after my congregation completed the surveys, they were more open to talk about racism and diversity with each other.

In closing, I have been fortunate to pastor four congregations that were welcoming and open to being pastored by a female pastor of color. Not everyone in the pastorates were on board with a female African American pastor, but the majority were. The appointments were in rural, suburban and urban churches. I was accepted by the congregations and we were able to excel in various areas, including, but not limited to membership and attendance increases, financial increases, meaningful congregational and pastoral relationship development and ministry growth and effectiveness. I had a few challenges, but none so drastic that we were not able to succeed in our goals and endeavors. I witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit change the hearts of racists to become loving, caring and accepting disciples of Jesus the Christ as they were transformed to be their true selves as children of God.

I thank God for the opportunity to serve as a cross-cultural pastor because from these pastorates, I established life-long friendships with people from different nationalities, ethnic background and genders. I am thankful to God for my experiences.

Appendix 1

CALIFORNIA-NEVADA

2019 MEMBERSHIP & PARTICIPATION

Table 1: Local Church Report to the Annual Conference

The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church 2017-2020 Quadrennium

Professing Membership

1 Total professing members reported at the close of last year 70,720 69,704 1% Decrease

| | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--------|-----------------------|
| 2a | Received this year on Profession of Faith through confirmation | 253 | 268 | |
| 2b | Received this year on Profession of Faith other than confirmation | 795 | 682 | 5% Increase |
| 2c | Membership restored by Affirmation of Faith | 96 | 144 | 14% Decrease |
| 2d | Added by correction | 514 | 268 | 50% Increase |
| 2e | Transferred in from another United Methodist Church | 468 | 535 | 47% Decrease |
| 2f | Transferred in from a non-United Methodist Church | 316 | 369 | 14% Increase |
| 3a | Removed by Charge Conference Action | 990 | 1,060 | 16% Increase |
| 3b | Withdrawn from Professing Membership | 305 | 468 | 7% Increase |
| 3c | Removed by Correction | 913 | 1,174 | 53% Increase |
| 3d | Transferred out to another United Methodist Church | 413 | 574 | 28% Increase |
| 3e | Transferred out to a non-United Methodist Church | 112 | 123 | 38% Increase |
| 3f | Removed by death/deceased | 964 | 857 | 9% Increase |
| 4 | TOTAL PROFESSING MEMBERS reported at the close of this year | 69,465 | 67,714 | 11% Decrease |
| 5a | Membership Ethnicity | | | 2% Decrease |
| 5a | Asian | 10,447 | 10,282 | 1% Decrease |
| 5b | Black | 5,714 | 5,546 | 2% Decrease |
| 5c | Hispanic/Latino | 2,666 | 2,684 | Less than 1% Increase |
| 5d | Native American | 438 | 411 | 6% Decrease |
| 5e | Pacific Islander | 4,523 | 4,573 | 1% Increase |
| 5f | White | 43,968 | 42,545 | 3% Decrease |
| 5g | Multiracial | 1,709 | 1,673 | 2% Decrease |

| | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--------|-------------|
| 5 | TOTAL MEMBERSHIP ETHNICITY (5a+5b+5c+5d+5e+5f+5g = 5 = 4) | 69,465 | 67,714 | 2% Decrease |
| 6a | Membership Gender | | | |
| 6a | Female | 44,564 | 43,490 | 2% Decrease |
| 6b | Male | 24,901 | 24,224 | 2% Decrease |

6 TOTAL MEMBERSHIP GENDER (6a+6b = 6 = 4) 69,465 67,714 2% Decrease

Appendix 2

D. Min Project Survey Questions for Clergy

Survey

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments of pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) in the United Methodist Church.

Thank you for completing this survey. Your identity will be kept confidential.

1. How would you like to identify yourself for the purposes of this survey?

Gender

Male _____ Female _____

Cultural Background check (Check as applicable)

Cultural Background of the Congregation (Check all that apply)

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| a. African American/Black | _____ | African American/Black | _____ |
| b. Caucasian/White | _____ | Caucasian/White | _____ |
| c. Chinese | _____ | Chinese | _____ |
| d. Fijian | _____ | Fijian | _____ |
| e. Filipino | _____ | Filipino | _____ |
| f. Hispanic/Latino | _____ | Hispanic/Latinx | _____ |
| g. Japanese | _____ | Japanese | _____ |
| h. Korean | _____ | Korean | _____ |
| i. Tongan | _____ | Tongan | _____ |
| j. Bi-racial | _____ | Bi-racial | _____ |
| k. Other _____ | _____ | Other | _____ |

1. How long have you been serving as a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
1-3 years ____ 4-7 years ____ 8-10 years ____ 10+ ____
2. How long have you been in your current appointment?
1-3 years ____ 4-7 years ____ 8-10 years ____ 10+ ____
3. Did you receive cross-cultural training before being assigned to your current appointment?
If yes, how has it helped you?

If no, do you feel you need it?
4. How did you prepare for this appointment?
5. Do you feel called to cross-cultural ministry? Why or why not?
6. What are your gifts and graces for this cross-cultural appointment?
7. How were you welcomed and received by the Staff Parish Relations Committee for the initial introduction?
8. How did the congregation welcome and receive you as a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
9. Did any members leave the church because you were appointed to the congregation?
10. Do you feel accepted and supported by the congregation? Why or why not?
11. What kind of challenges have you faced as a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
12. Do you feel that you have faced or facing disrespect, intolerance, racism, or bigotry in your current cross-cultural appointment?
13. Do you feel that the racial, ethnic or cultural dynamics within your congregation have improved since you have been the pastor? Why or why not?
14. What are the benefits to you and the congregation of a cross-cultural appointment?
15. Was your church considered vital, stable or declining prior to your appointment?
16. Is your church currently considered vital, stable or declining?
17. Is the church experiencing membership growth since you have been the pastor?

Why or why not?

18. What areas of the life of the church (such as worship, preaching, spiritual care, faith development, administration, mission and evangelism) do you feel are challenging for you?

19. Is the broader community in which you minister accepting of you serving in a cross-cultural appointment?

20. Within the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) of the United Methodist Church, do you feel that cross-cultural appointments are a good idea or problematic?

21. What advice would you give the Bishop or Cabinet regarding cross-cultural appointments?

Appendix 3

D. Min Project Survey Questions for Laity

Survey

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of cross-cultural appointments of pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference (CNAC) in the United Methodist Church. Thank you for completing this survey. Your identity will be kept confidential.

1. How would you like to identify yourself for the purposes of this survey?

Gender

Male _____ Female _____

Cultural Background check (Check as applicable)

Cultural Background of the Congregation (Check all that apply)

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| a. African American/Black | _____ | African American/Black | _____ |
| b. Caucasian/White | _____ | Caucasian/White | _____ |
| c. Chinese | _____ | Chinese | _____ |
| d. Fijian | _____ | Fijian | _____ |
| e. Filipino | _____ | Filipino | _____ |
| f. Hispanic/Latino | _____ | Hispanic/Latinx | _____ |
| g. Japanese | _____ | Japanese | _____ |
| h. Korean | _____ | Korean | _____ |
| i. Tongan | _____ | Tongan | _____ |
| j. Bi-racial | _____ | Bi-racial | _____ |
| k. Other _____ | _____ | Other | _____ |

Survey Questions

1. How long have you been serving as a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
1-3 years ____ 4-7 years ____ 8-10 years ____ 10+ ____
2. How long have you been in your current appointment?
1-3 years ____ 4-7 years ____ 8-10 years ____ 10+ ____
1. Is your current cross-cultural pastoral appointment the first for your church?
____ 1st ____ 2nd ____ 3rd ____ one of many
2. What do you consider to be the benefits of a cross-cultural pastoral appointment?
3. What are the challenges facing a cross-cultural pastoral appointment?
4. How has your church benefitted from having a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
5. How did your congregation prepare for a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment?
6. Did members of your church leave because your cross-cultural pastor was appointed to your church?
7. Do you feel your congregation is accepting of a pastor in a cross-cultural appointment? Why or why not?
8. In what ways does your congregation support your pastor in this cross-cultural appointment?
9. What indicators are there of intolerance, racism and bigotry in your congregation?
10. Does the community accept your pastor serving in a cross-cultural appointment? In what ways?
11. What gifts and graces does your pastor have for a cross-cultural appointment?
12. What insights or observations would you offer for the Bishop or Cabinet regarding cross-cultural appointments?

Appendix 4

Telephone Interview Questions

Cross-Cultural Trainers

1. Name five points that you would like to say about cross-cultural pastoring.

Pastors who have pastored churches of their own culture and cross-cultural churches.

1. Now that you have pastored both a cross-culture church and a church of your own culture, which do you prefer and why?

District Superintendents

1. Do you think that cross-cultural pastoral assignments make the church inclusive?
2. What are the qualities of an effective cross-cultural pastor?
3. Do you think that cross-cultural appointments are effective?
4. What are your recommendations or opinions about cross-cultural appointments?

Appendix 5

CCORR PRESENTATION TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION 2020

Bishop Minerva Carcaño, friends and members of our California/Nevada Annual Conference Session 2020. Today, we find ourselves witnessing and experiencing new challenges that have caused us to pause for a moment and reflect on “where” God may be leading us as members of the body of Christ that is so culturally and racially diverse and “what” God may be calling us to do. With our diversity we are uniquely positioned to provide intentional processes for increasing the inclusion and effectiveness of those transformed to be Christ-like, that is to be engaged in this ministry of reconciliation. Indeed, we are all taking bold steps to learn to adjust to the ‘new norm’ as we live and minister together as God’s people during these unprecedented times. With the vast challenges that confronts our society, racism has crept to the fore-front of our communities and sometimes even seen in the church or Christian communities. Racism is a systematic sin which we will continue to face in our lives.

Friends, we need to be bold to refute and strongly rebuke this sin of racism. We thank Bishop Minerva Carcaño for her leadership during such times as these. She has been in dialogue with the Conference Commission on Religion & Race and recently with the partnership of our Conference Lay Leader, Micheal Pope, and the support of the district superintendents, she met with the pastors and leaders of all 6 of our historic African American congregations and our African American pastors serving in cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments as we respond to the Black Lives Matter movement and the causes behind this movement. With her Extended Cabinet she has met with all racial-ethnic ministry-focused conference committees and caucuses and has followed that up with meetings with racial-ethnic leaders as ministry challenges and opportunities have arisen.

These are the Framework of our task:

1. Expand our understanding of racism beyond personal prejudice and hate to systemic racism.
2. Focus on actions and impacts rather than attitudes and intentions.
3. Add a racial lens to conversations on class, gender, sexuality, etc.
4. Cultivate discourse that centers on the humanity and leadership of people of color.

We propose that all levels of our AC commit to accountability to addressing, repenting of and moving beyond this sin within our denomination, our Conference, our local churches, our communities and in ourselves. It is clear that confronting personal and systemic racism can be confusing and challenging as well as a spiritual task. How easy it is to make pronouncements. How often we have heard that after resolutions and recommendations are agreed upon, nothing concrete really happens! However, actions are needed if we are to address, repent of and move beyond racism in its various forms, if our resolutions are to have integrity and lead to effective and wide-spread justice shaping change.

CCORR has struggled with how to facilitate such engagement within our local churches, our districts, and with our conference leadership. All such engagement begins with us as individual Christians with our different realities and our various levels of responsibility to family, to community and to church. We all need to be open to learn, to reflect, and to challenge our assumptions. We are led to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit to give us the vision and the courage to change our behavior, to act as individuals, as local churches and as our denomination to effectively engage systemic and individual racism. This will only happen if we are committed and keep the justice-seeking gospel of Jesus the Christ in front of us and within us.

To that end the Conference Commission on Religion & Race commits to the following actions:

1. To develop and facilitate webinars aimed at various constituencies of our Conference.
2. To develop and facilitate, via ZOOM, cross-cultural/cross-racial communication workshops. These will be designed to be relevant to various constituencies within our Conference, for example but not limited to, youth, clergy, laypersons, congregational leadership, candidates for ministry, clergy and congregations in cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments. The scheduling of these workshops will be coordinated with the district superintendents, leadership development, congregational development, and conference communications leaders.
3. To work collaboratively with the bishop and the district superintendents in resourcing local churches and pastors in their work of:

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| | Eliminating racism and racial inequity and intentionally striving to become the beloved community God calls us to be; |
| • | Receiving and welcoming a cross-racial and cross-cultural appointment; Sharing facilities with communities of other races and cultures, and who may speak a different language; Seeking to faithfully respond to the ministry needs of communities of color. |
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The bishop and her Appointive and Extended Cabinets will meet with the CCORR twice a year to plan and assure that this work is done intentionally and effectively.

In connection with this, the Conference Commission on Religion & Race has spoken with Bishop Carcaño and she has recommended that we join her in reading the book, *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, in this coming appointment year. We would also recommend the following books for reading and discussion in our local churches and Circuits.

- *Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander
- *The Disinherited* by Howard Thurman
- *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America* by Jim Wallis

We recognize that these books are all in English which may exclude those for whom English is not their native language. Therefore, CCORR will identify audio-visual materials which address racial justice/racism issues to be available for these congregations and groups as well.

Our hope is that congregations would engage in this study to move the race conversation forward and live in God's beloved community. This could be done in local churches, youth groups, and within other entities, for example, Circuits, and District and Conference committees, agencies, and caucuses. Local church groups that share in such a study could let their District

Superintendent know and/or include their experience in their Annual Charge/Church Conference report.

In conclusion, Bishop, friends and members of our Annual Conference, it has been my honor and privilege to have served you for these past four years, as the Chairperson of our Conference Commission on Religion & Race. Next month, effective on October 1st, my colleague and sister in-Christ, Iunisi Tovo will become the new Chairperson of Conference Commission on Religion & Race. My colleague, Iunisi Tovo, currently serves as the pastor of Sebastopol United Methodist Church, in Sebastopol. It is our hope and prayer that the good Lord will guide and shepherd us through these challenging times together.

Vinaka vakalevu and blessings to all of us and our loved ones.

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